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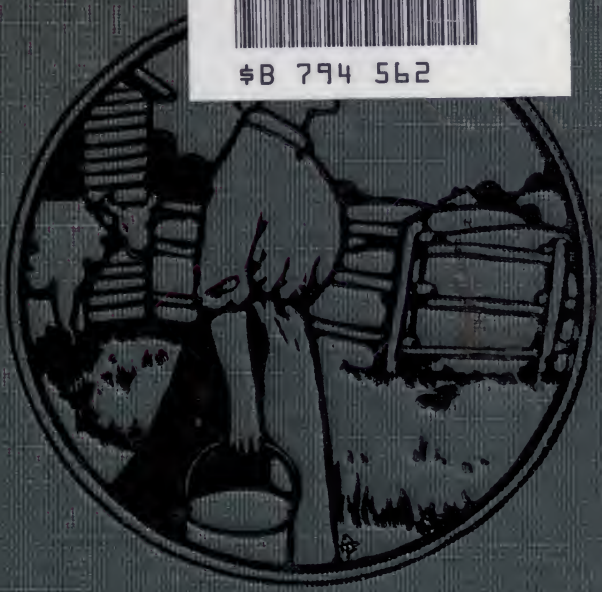

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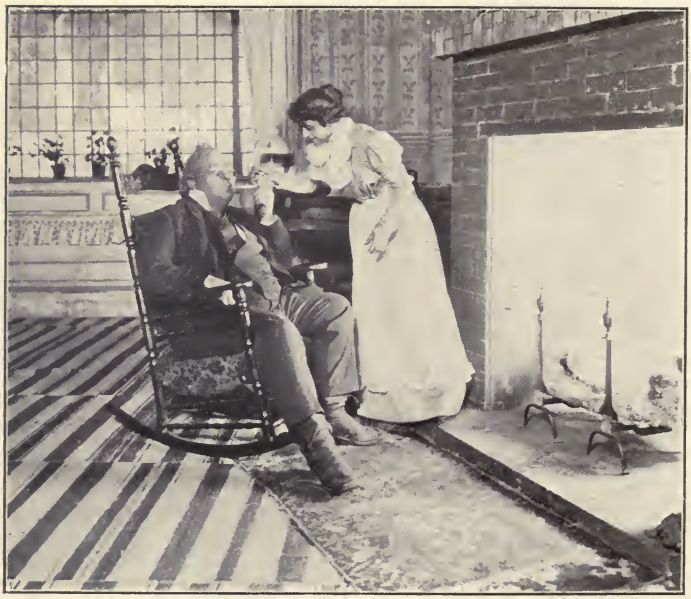

ANNA AND THE SQUIRE.

Geo. C. Wilkins -

'Way Down East

A ROMANCE OF NEW ENGLAND LIFE

BY

JOSEPH R. GRISMER

Founded on the Phenomenally Successful Play of the Same Title by

LOTTIE BLAIR PARKER

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WAY DOWN EAST

CHAPTER I.

ALL HAIL TO THE CONQUERING HERO.

Methinks I feel this youth's perfections,
With an invisible and subtle stealth,
To creep in at mine eyes.

—*Shakespeare.*

It had come at last, the day of days, for the two great American universities; Harvard and Yale were going to play their annual game of football and the railroad station of Springfield, Mass., momentarily became more and more thronged with eager partisans of both sides of the great athletic contest.

All the morning trains from New York, New Haven, Boston and the smaller towns had been pouring their loads into Springfield. Hampden Park was a sea of eager faces. The weather was fine and the waiting for the football game only added to the enjoyment—the appetizer before the feast.

The north side of the park was a crimson dotted mass full ten thousand strong; the south side showed the same goodly number blue-bespeckled, and equally confident. Little ripples of applause woke along the banks as the familiar faces of old "grads" loomed up, then melted into the vast throng. These, too, were men of international reputation who had won their spurs in the great battles of life, and yet, who came back year after year, to assist by applause in these mimic battles of their *Alma Mater*.

But the real inspiration to the contestants, were the softer, sweeter faces scattered among the more rugged ones like flowers growing among the grain—the smiles, the mantling glow of round young cheeks, the clapping of little hands —these were the things that made broken collar-

bones, scratched faces, and bruised limbs but so many honors to be contended for, votive offerings to be laid at the little feet of these fair ones.

Mrs. Standish Tremont's party occupied, as usual, a prominent place on the Harvard side. She was so great a factor in the social life at Cambridge that no function could have been a complete success without the stimulus of her presence. Personally, Mrs. Standish Tremont was one of those women who never grow old; one would no more have thought of hazarding a guess about her age than one would have made a similar calculation about the Goddess of Liberty. She was perennially young, perennially good-looking, and her entertainments were above reproach. Some sour old "Grannies" in Boston, who had neither her wit, nor her health, called her Venus Anno Domino, but they were jealous and cynical and their testimony cannot be taken as reliable.

What if she had been splitting gloves applauding college games since the father's of to-day's contestants had fought and struggled for similar honors in this very field. She applauded with

such vim, and she gave such delightful dinners afterward, that for the glory of old Harvard, it is to be hoped she will continue to applaud and entertain the grandsons of to-day's victors, even as she had their sires.

It was said by the uncharitable that the secret of the lady's youth was the fact that she always surrounded herself with young people, their pleasure, interests, entertainments were hers; she never permitted herself to be identified with older people.

To-day, besides several young men who had been out of college for a year or two, she had her husband's two nieces, the Misses Tremont, young women well known in Boston's inner circles, her own daughter, a Mrs. Endicott, a widow, and a very beautiful young girl whom she introduced as "My cousin, Miss Moore."

Miss Moore was the recipient of more attention than she could well handle. Mrs. Tremont's cavaliers tried to inveigle her into betting gloves and bon-bons; they reserved their wittiest replies for her, they were her ardent allies in all the merry badinage with which their party whiled

away the time waiting for the game to begin. Miss Moore was getting enough attention to turn the heads of three girls.

At least, that was what her chaperone concluded as she skilfully concealed her dissatisfaction with a radiant smile. She liked girls to achieve social success when they were under her wing—it was the next best thing to scoring success on her own account. But, it was quite a different matter to invite a poor relation half out of charity, half out of pity, and then have her outshine one's own daughter, and one's nieces —the latter being her particular protégés—girls whom she hoped to assist toward brilliant establishments. The thought was a disquieting one, the men of their party had been making idiots of themselves over the girl ever since they left Boston; it was all very well to be kind to one's poor kin—but charity began at home when there were girls who had been out three seasons! What was it, that made the men lose their heads like so many sheep? She adjusted her lorgnette and again took an inventory of the girl's appearance. It was eminently satisfactory, even when viewed

from the critical standard of Mrs. Standish Tremont. A delicately oval face, with low smooth brow, from which the night-black hair rippled in softly crested waves and clung about the temples in tiny circling ringlets, delicate as the faintest shading of a crayon pencil. Heavily fringed lids that lent mysterious depths to the great brown eyes that were sorrowful beyond their years. A mouth made for kisses—a perfect Cupid's bow; in color, the red of the pomegranate—such was Anna Moore, the great lady's young kinswoman, who was getting her first glimpse of the world this autumn afternoon.

"You were born to be a Harvard girl, Miss Moore, the crimson becomes you so perfectly; that great bunch of Jacqueminots is just what you need to bring out the color in your cheeks," said Arnold Lester, rather an old beau, and one of Mrs. Endicott's devoted cavaliers.

"Miss Moore is making her roses pale with envy," gallantly answered Robert Maynard. He had not been able to take his eyes from the girl's face since he met her.

Anna looked down at her roses and smiled.

Her gown and gloves were black. The great fragrant bunch was the only suggestion of color that she had worn for over a year. She was still in mourning for her father, one of the first great financial magnates to go under in the last Wall Street crash. His failure killed him, and the young daughter and the invalid wife were left practically unprovided for.

Mrs. Tremont could hardly conceal her annoyance. She had met her young cousin for the first time the preceding summer and taking a fancy to her; she exacted a promise from the girl's mother that Anna should pay her a visit the following autumn. But she reckoned without the girl's beauty and the havoc it would make with her plans. The discussion as to the roses outvieing Anna's cheeks in color was abruptly terminated by a great cheer that rolled simultaneously along both sides of the field as the two teams entered the lists. Cheer upon cheer went up, swelled and grew in volume, only to be taken up again and again, till the sound became one vast echoing roar without apparent end or beginning.

From the moment the teams appeared, Anna

Moore had no eyes or ears for sights or sounds about her. Every muscle in her lithe young body was strained to catch a glimpse of one familiar figure. She had little difficulty in singling him out from the rest. He had stripped off his sweater and stood with head well down, his great limbs tense, straining for the word to spring. Anna's breath came quickly, as if she had been running, the roses that he had sent her heaved with the tumult in her breast. It seemed to her as if she must cry out with the delight of seeing him again.

"Look, Grace," said Mrs. Standish Tremont, to the younger of her nieces, "there is Lennox Sanderson."

"Play!" called the referee, and at the word the Harvard wedge shot forward and crashed into the onrushing mass of blue-legged bodies. The mimic war was on, and raged with all the excitement of real battle for the next three-quarters of an hour; the center was pierced, the flanks were turned, columns were formed and broken, weak spots were protected, all the tactics of the science

of arms was employed, and yet, neither side could gain an advantage.

The last minutes of the first half of the game were spent desperately—Kenneth, the terrible line breaker of Yale, made two famous charges, Lennox Sanderson, the famous flying half-back, secured Harvard a temporary advantage by a magnificently supported run. "Time!" called the referee, and the first half of the game was over.

For fifteen minutes the combatants rested, then resumed their massing, wedging and driving. Sanderson, who had not appeared to over-exert himself during the first half of the game, gradually began to turn the tide in favor of the crimson. After a decoy and a scrimmage, Sanderson, with the ball wedged tightly under one arm, was seen flying like a meteor, well covered by his supports. On he dashed at full speed for the much-desired touch-line. The next minute he had reached the goal and was buried under a pile of squirming bodies.

Then did the Harvard hosts burst into one mighty and prolonged cheer that made the air tremble. Sanderson was the hero of the hour.

Gray-haired old men jumped up and shouted his name with that of the university. It was one mad pandemonium of excitement, till the game was won, and the crowd woke up amid the "Rah, Rahs, Harvard, Sanderson."

Anna's cheeks burned crimson. She clapped her hands to the final destruction of her gloves. She patted the roses he had sent her. She had never dreamed that life was so beautiful, so full of happiness.

She saw him again for just a moment, before they left the park. He came up to speak to them, with the sweat and grime of battle still upon him, his hair flying in the breeze. The crowds gave way for the hero; women gave him their brightest smiles; men involuntarily straightened their shoulders in tribtue to his inches.

Years afterwards, it seemed to Anna, in looking back on the tragedy of it all, that he had never looked so handsome, never been so absolutely irresistible as on that autumn day when he had taken her hand and said: "I couldn't help making that run with your eyes on me."

"And we shall see you at tea, on Saturday?" asked Mrs. Tremont.

"I shall be delighted," he answered: "thank you for persuading Miss Moore to stay over for another week." Mrs. Tremont smiled, she could smile if she were on the rack; but she assured herself that she was done with poverty-stricken beauties till Grace and Maud were married, at least. For years she had been planning a match between Grace and Lennox Sanderson.

Anna and Sanderson exchanged looks. Robert Maynard bit his lips and turned away. He realized that the dearest wish of his life was beyond reach of it forever. "Ah, well," he murmured to himself—"who could have a chance against Lennox Sanderson?"

CHAPTER II.

THE CONQUERING HERO IS DISPOSED TO BE HUMAN.

"Her lips are roses over-wash'd with dew,
Or like the purple of narcissus' flower;
No frost their fair, no wind doth waste their powers,
But by her breath her beauties do renew."

—*Robert Greene.*

THE dusk of an autumn afternoon was closing in on the well-filled library of Mrs. Standish Tremont's Beacon street home. The last rays of sunlight filtered softly through the rose silk curtains and blended with the ruddy glow of fire-light. The atmosphere of this room was more invitingly domestic than that of any other room in Mrs. Tremont's somewhat bleakly luxurious home.

Perhaps it was the row upon row of books in

their scarlet leather bindings, perhaps it was the fine old collection of Dutch masterpieces, portraying homely scenes from Dutch life, that robbed the air of the chilling effect of the more formal rooms; but, whatever was the reason, the fact remained that the library was the room in which to dream dreams, appreciate comfort and be content.

At least so it seemed to Anna Moore, as she glanced from time to time at the tiny French clock that silently ticked away the hours on the high oaken mantel-piece. Anna had dressed for tea with more than usual care on this particular Saturday afternoon. She wore a simply made house gown of heavy white cloth, that hung in rich folds about her exquisite figure, that might have seemed over-developed in a girl of eighteen, were it not for the long slender throat and tapering waist of more than usual slenderness.

The dark hair was coiled high on top of the shapely head, and a few tendrils strayed about her neck and brow. She wore no ornaments—not even the simplest pin.

She was curled up in a great leather chair, in

front of the open fire, playing with a white angora kitten, who climbed upon her shoulder and generally conducted himself like a white ball of animated yarn. It was too bad that there was no painter at hand to transfer to canvas so lovely a picture as this girl in her white frock made, sitting by the firelight in this mellow old room, playing with a white imp of a kitten. It would have made an ideal study in white and scarlet.

How comfortable it all was; the book-lined walls, the repose and dignity of this beautiful home, with its corps of well-trained servants waiting to minister to one's lightest wants. The secure and sheltered feeling that it gave appealed strongly to the girl, who but a little while ago had enjoyed similar surroundings in her father's house.

And then, there had been that awful day when her father's wealth had vanished into air like a burst bubble, and he had come home with a white drawn face and gone to bed, never again to rise from it.

Anna did not mind the privations that followed on her own account, but they were pitifully hard

on her invalid mother, who had been used to every comfort all her life.

After they had left New York, they had taken a little cottage in Waltham, Mass., and it was here that Mrs. Standish Tremont had come to call on her relatives in their grief and do what she could toward lightening their burdens. Anna was worn out with the constant care of her mother, and would only consent to go away for a rest, because the doctor told her that her health was surely breaking under the strain, and that if she did not go, there would be two invalids instead of one.

It was at Mrs. Tremont's that she had met Lennox Sanderson, and from the first, both seemed to be under the influence of some subtle spell that drew them together blindly, and without the consent of their wills. Mrs. Tremont, who viewed the growing attraction of these two young people with well-concealed alarm, watched every opportunity to prevent their enjoying each other's society. It irritated her that one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Harvard should take such a fancy to her penniless young relative, in-

stead of to Grace Tremont, whom she had selected for his wife.

There were few things that Mrs. Tremont enjoyed so much as arranging romances in every-day life.

"Pardon me, Miss Moore," said the butler, standing at her elbow, "but there has been a telephone message from Mrs. Tremont, saying that she and Mrs. Endicott have been detained, and will you be kind enough to explain this to Mr. Sanderson." Anna never knew what the message cost Mrs. Tremont.

A moment later, Sanderson's card was sent up; Anna rose to meet him with swiftly beating heart.

"What perfect luck," he said. "How do I happen to find you alone? Usually you have a regiment of people about you."

"Cousin Frances has just telephoned that she has been detained, and I suppose I am to entertain you till her return."

"I shall be sufficiently entertained if I may have the pleasure of looking at you."

"Till dinner time? You could never stand it." She laughed.

"It would be a pleasure till eternity."

"At any rate," said Anna, "I am not going to put you to the test. If you will be good enough to ring for tea, I will give you a cup."

The butler brought in the tea. Anna lighted the spirit lamp with pretty deftness, and proceeded to make tea.

"I could not have taken this, even from your hands last week, Anna—pardon me, Miss Moore."

"And why not? Had you been taking pledges not to drink tea?"

"It seems to me as if I've been living on rare beef and whole wheat bread ever since I can remember——"

"Oh, yes, I forgot about your being in training for the game, but you did so magnificently, you ought not to mind it. Why, you made Harvard win the game. We were all so proud of you."

"All! I don't care about 'all.' Were you proud of me?"

"Of course I was," she answered with the loveliest blush.

"Then it is amply repaid."

"Let me give you another cup of tea."

"No, thanks, I don't care about any more, but if you will let me talk to you about something—See here, Anna. Yes, I mean Anna. What nonsense for us to attempt to keep up the Miss Moore and Mr. Sanderson business. I used to scoff at love at first sight and say it was all the idle fancy of the poets. Then I met you and remained to pray. You've turned my world topsy-turvy. I can't think without you, and yet it would be folly to tell this to my Governor, and ask his consent to our marriage. He wants me to finish college, take the usual trip around the world and then go into the firm. Besides, he wants me to eventually marry a cousin of mine—a girl with a lot of money and with about as much heart as would fit on the end of a pin."

She had followed this speech with almost painful attention. She bit her lips till they were but a compressed line of coral. At last she found words to say:

"We must not talk of these things, Mr. Sanderson. I have to go back and care for my mother. She is an invalid and needs all my attention. Besides, we are poor; desperately poor. I am here in your world, only through the kindness of my cousin, Mrs. Tremont."

"It was your world till a year ago, Anna. I know all about your father's failure, and how nobly you have done your part since then, and it kills me to think of you, who ought to have everything, spending your life—your youth—in that stupid little Waltham, doing the work of a housemaid."

"I am very glad to do my part," she answered him bravely, but her eyes were full of unshed tears.

"Anna, dearest, listen to me." He crossed over to where she sat and took her hand. "Can't you have a little faith in me and do what I am going to ask you? There is the situtaion exactly. My father won't consent to our marriage, so there is no use trying to persuade him. And here you are—a little girl who needs some one to take care of you and help you take care of your mother,

give her all the things that mean so much to an invalid. Now, all this can be done, darling, if you will only have faith in me. Marry me now secretly, before you go back to Waltham. No one need know. And then the governor can be talked around in time. My allowance will be ample to give you and your mother all you need. Can't you see, darling?"

The color faded from her cheeks. She looked at him with eyes as startled as a surprised fawn.

"O, Lennox, I would be afraid to do that."

"You would not be afraid, Anna, if you loved me."

It was so tempting to the weary young soul, who had already begun to sink under the accumulated burdens of the past year, not for herself, but for the sick mother, who complained unceasingly of the changed conditions of their lives. The care and attention would mean so much to her—and yet, what right had she to encourage this man to go against the wishes of his father, to take advantage of his love for her? But she was grateful to him, and there was a wealth of tenderness in the eyes that she turned toward him.

"No, Lennox, I appreciate your generosity, but I do not think it would be wise for either of us."

"Don't talk to me of generosity. Good God, Anna, can't you realize what this separation means to me? I have no heart to go on with my life away from you. If you are going to throw me over, I shall cut college and go away."

She loved him all the better for his impatience.

"Anna," he said—the two dark heads were close together, the madness of the impulse was too much for both. Their lips met in a first long kiss. The man was to have his way. The kiss proved a more eloquent argument than all his pleading.

"Say you will, Anna."

"Yes," she whispered.

And then they heard the street door open and close, and the voices of Mrs. Tremont and her daughter, as they made their way to the library. And the two young souls, who hovered on the brink of heaven, were obliged to listen to the latest gossip of fashionable Boston.

CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING SOME REFLECTIONS AND THE ENTRANCE OF MEPHISTOPHELES.

"Not all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,
Nor florid prose, nor horrid lies of rhyme,
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime."
—*Byron.*

LENNOX SANDERSON was stretched in his window-seat with a book, of which, however, he knew nothing—not even the title—his mind being occupied by other thoughts than reading at that particular time.

Did he dare do it? The audacity of the proceeding was sufficient to make the iron will of even Lennox Sanderson waver. And yet, to lose her! Such a contingency was not to be considered. His mind flew backward and forward like

a shuttle, he turned the leaves of his book; he smoked, but no light came from within or without.

He glanced about the familiar objects in his sitting-room as one unconsciously does when the mind is on the rack of anxiety, as if to seek council from the mute things that make up so large a part of our daily lives.

It was an ideal sitting-room for a college student, the luxury of the appointments absolutely subservient to taste and simplicity. Heavy red curtains divided the sitting-room from the bedroom beyond, and imparted a degree of genial warmth to the atmosphere. Russian candlesticks of highly polished brass stood about on the mantel-piece and book shelves. Above the high oak wainscoting the walls were covered with dark red paper, against which background brown photographs of famous paintings showed to excellent advantage. They were reproductions of Botticelli, Rembrant, Franz Hals and Velasquez hung with artistic irregularity. Above the mantel-piece were curious old weapons, swords, matchetes, flintlocks and carbines. A helmet and

breastplate filled the space between the two windows. Some dozen or more of pipe racks held the young collegian's famous collection of pipes that told the history of smoking from the introduction during the reign of Elizabeth, down to the present day.

In taking a mental inventory of his household goods, Sanderson's eyes fell on the photograph of a woman on the mantel-piece. He frowned. What right had she there, when his mind was full of another? He walked over to the picture and threw it into the fire. It was not the first picture to know a similar fate after occupying that place of honor.

The blackened edges of the picture were whirling up the chimney, when Sanderson's attention was arrested by a knock.

"Come in," he called, and a young man of about his own age entered. Without being in the least ill-looking, there was something repellent about the new comer. His eyes were shifty and too close together to be trustworthy. Otherwise no fault could be found with his appearance.

"Well, Langdon, how are you?" his host asked, but there was no warmth in his greeting.

"As well as a poor devil like me ever is," began Langdon obsequiously. He sighed, looked about the comfortable room and finished with: "Lucky dog."

Sanderson stood on no ceremony with his guest, who was a thoroughly unscrupulous young man. Once or twice Langdon had helped Sanderson out of scrapes that would have sent him home from college without his degree, had they come to the ears of the faculty. In return for this assistance, Sanderson had lent him large sums of money, which the owner entertained no hopes of recovering. Sanderson tried to balance matters by treating Langdon with scant ceremony when they were alone.

"Well, old man," began his host, "I do not flatter myself that I owe this call to any personal charm. You dropped in to ease a little financial embarrassment by the request of a loan—am I not right?"

"Right, as usual, Sandy, though I'd hardly call it a loan. You know I was put to a devil of a

lot of trouble about that Newton affair, and it cost money to secure a shut mouth."

Sanderson frowned. "This is the fifth time I have had the pleasure of settling for that Newton affair, Langdon. It seems to have become a sort of continuous performance."

Langdon winced.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Langdon. You owe me two thousand now, not counting that poker debt. We'll call it square if you'll attend to a little matter for me and I'll give you an extra thou. to make it worth your while."

"You know I am always delighted to help you, Sandy."

"When I make it worth your while."

"Put it that way if you wish."

"Do you think that for once in your life you could look less like the devil than you are naturally, and act the role of parson?"

"I might if I associate with you long enough. Saintly company might change my expression."

"You won't have time to try. You've got to have your clerical look in good working order by Friday. Incidently you are to marry me to the

prettiest girl in Massachusetts and keep your mouth closed."

As if to end the discussion, Sanderson strode over to his desk and wrote out a check for a thousand dollars. He came back, waving it in the air to dry the ink.

"Perhaps you will condescend to explain," Langdon said, as he pocketed the check.

"Explanations are always bores, my dear boy. There is a little girl who feels obliged to insist on formalities, not too many. She'll think your acting as the parson the best joke in the world, but it would not do to chaff her about it."

"Oh, I see," and Langdon's laugh was not pleasant.

"Exactly. You will have everything ready—white choker, black coat and all the rest of it, and now, my dear boy, you've got to excuse me as I've got a lot of work on hand."

They shook hands and Langdon's footsteps were soon echoing down the corridor.

The foul insinuation that Sanderson had just made about Anna rankled in his mind. He went to the sideboard and poured himself out a good

stiff drink. After that, his conscience did not trouble him.

The work on account of which he excused himself from Langdon's society, was apparently not of the most pressing order, for Sanderson almost immediately started for Boston, turning his steps towards Mrs. Standish Tremont's.

"Mrs. Tremont was not at home," the man announced at the door, "and Mrs. Endicott was confined to her room with a bad headache. Should he take his card to Miss Moore?"

Sanderson assented, feeling that fate was with him.

"My darling," he said, as Anna came in a moment later, and folded her close in a long embrace. She was paler than when he had last seen her and there were dark rings under her eyes that hinted at long night vigils.

"Lennox," she said, "do not think me weak, but I am terribly frightened. It does not seem as if we were doing the right thing by our friends."

"Goosey girl," he said, kissing her, "who was it that said no marriage ever suited all parties unconcerned?"

She laughed. "I am thinking more of you Lennox, than of myself. Suppose your father should not forgive you, cut you off without a cent, and you should have to drudge all your life with mother and me on your hands! Don't you think you would wish we had never met, or, at least, that I had thought of these things?"

"Suppose the sky should fall, or the sun should go out, or that I could stop loving you, or any of the impossible things that could not happen once in a million years. Aren't you ashamed of yourself to doubt me in this way? Answer me, miss," he said with mock ferocity.

For answer she laid her cheek against his.—"I am so happy, dear, that I am almost afraid."

He pressed her tenderly. "And now, darling, for the conspiracy—Cupid's conspiracy. You write to your mother to-night and say that you will be home on Wednesday because you will. Then tell Mrs. Tremont that you have had a wire from her saying you must go home Friday (I'll see that you *do* receive such a telegram), and leave Friday morning by the 9:40. I will keep out of the way, because the entire Tremont con-

tingent will doubtless see you off. I will then meet you at one of the stations near Boston. I can't tell you which, till I hear from my friend, the Reverend John Langdon. He will have everything arranged."

She looked at him with dilating eyes, her cheeks blanched with fear.

"Anna," he said, almost roughly, "if you have no confidence in me, I will go out of your life forever."

"Yes, yes, I believe in you," she said. "It isn't that, but it is the first thing I have ever kept from mother, and I would feel so much more comfortable if she knew."

"Baby. An' so de ittle baby must tell its muvver ev'yting," he mimicked her, till she felt ashamed of her good impulse—am impulse which if she had yielded to, it would have saved her from all the bitterness she was to know.

"And so you will do as I ask you, darling?"

"Yes."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes," and they sealed the bargain with a kiss.

"Dearest, I must be going. It would never do

for Mrs. Tremont to see us together. I should forget and call you pet names, and then you would be sent supperless to bed, like the little girls in the story books."

"I suppose you must go," she said, regretfully.

"It will not be for long," and with another kiss he left her.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOCK MARRIAGE.

"Thus grief still treads upon the heel of pleasure,
Married in haste, we may repent at leisure."
—*Congreve.*

It seemed to Anna when Friday came, that human experience had nothing further to offer in the way of mental anguish and suspense. She had thrashed out the question of her secret marriage to Sanderson till her brain refused to work further, and there was in her mind only dread and a haunting sense of loss. If she had only herself to consider, she would not have hesitated a moment. But Sanderson, his father, and her own mother were all involved.

Was she doing right by her mother? At times, the advantage to the invalid accruing from this

marriage seemed manifold. Again it seemed to Anna but a senseless piece of folly, prompted by her own selfish love for Sanderson. And so the days wore on until the eventful Friday came, and Anna said good-bye to Mrs. Standish Tremont with livid cheeks and tearful eyes.

"And do you feel so badly about going away, my dear?" said the great lady, looking at those visible signs of distress and feeling not a little flattered by her young cousin's show of affection. "We must have you down soon again," and she patted Anna's cheek and hurried her into the car, for Mrs. Tremont had a horror of scenes and signals warned her that Anna was on the verge of tears.

The locomotive whistled, the cars gave a jolt, and Anna Moore was launched on her tragic fate. She never knew how the time passed after leaving Mrs. Tremont, till Sanderson joined her at the next station. She felt as if her will power had deserted her, and she was dumbly obeying the behests of some unseen relentless force. She looked at the strange faces about her, hopelessly. Perhaps it was not too late—perhaps some kind

motherly woman would tell her if she were doing right. But they all looked so strange and forbidding, and while she turned the question over and over in her mind, the car stopped, the brakeman called the station and Lennox Sanderson got on.

She turned to him in her utter perplexity, forgetting he was the cause of it.

"My darling, how pale you are. Are you ill?"

"Not ill, but——" He would not let her finish, but reassured her by the tenderest of looks, the warmest of hand clasps, and the terrified girl began to lose the hunted feeling that she had.

They rode on for fully an hour. Sanderson was perfectly self-possessed. He might have been married every day in the year, for any difference it made in his demeanor. He was perfectly composed, laughed and chatted as wittily as ever. In time, Anna partook of his mood and laughed back. She felt as if a weight had been lifted off her mind. At last they stopped at a little station called Whiteford. An old-fashioned carriage was waiting for them; they entered it and the driver whipped up his horses. A drive of a half mile brought them to an ideal white cottage, surround-

ed by porches and hidden in a tangle of vines. The door was opened for them by the Rev. John Langdon in person. He seemed a preternaturally grave young man to Anna and his clerical attire was above reproach. Any misgivings one might have had regarding him on the score of his youth, were more than counterbalanced by his almost supernatural gravity.

He apologized for the absence of his wife, saying she had been called away suddenly, owing to the illness of her mother. His housekeeper and gardener would act as witnesses. Sanderson hastily took Anna to one side and said: "I forgot to tell you, darling, that I am going to be married by my two first names only, George Lennox. It is just the same, but if the Sanderson got into any of those country marriage license papers, I should be afraid the governor would hear of it—penalty of having a great name, you know," he concluded gayly. "Thought I had better mention it, as it would not do to have you surprised over your husband's name."

Again the feeling of dread completely overpowered her. She looked at him with her great

sorrowful eyes, as a trapped animal will sometimes look at its captor, but she could not speak. Some terrible blight seemed to have overgrown her brain, depriving her of speech and will power.

The witnesses entered. Anna was too agitated to notice that the Rev. John Langdon's housekeeper was a very singular looking young woman for her position. Her hair was conspicuously dark at the roots and conspicuously light on the ends. Her face was hard and when she smiled her mouth assumed a wolfish expression. She was loudly dressed and wore a profusion of jewelry—altogether a most remarkable looking woman for the place she occupied.

The gardener had the appearance of having been suddenly wakened before nature had had her full quota of sleep. He was blear-eyed and his breath was more redolent of liquor than one might have expected in the gardener of a parsonage.

The room in which the ceremony was to take place was the ordinary cottage parlor, with crochet work on the chairs, and a profusion of

vases and bric-a-brac on the tables. The Rev. John Langdon requested Anna and Sanderson to stand by a little marble table from which the housekeeper brushed a profusion of knick-knacks. There was no Bible. Anna was the first to notice the omission. This seemd to deprive the young clergyman of his dignity. He looked confused, blushed, and turning to the housekeeper told her to fetch the Bible. This seemed to appeal to the housekeeper's sense of humor. She burst out laughing and said something about looking for a needle in a haystack. Sanderson turned on her furiously, and she left the room, looking sour, and muttering indignantly. She returned, after what seemed an interminable space of time, and the ceremony proceeded.

Anna did not recognize her own voice as she answered the responses. Sanderson's was clear and ringing; his tones never faltered. When the time came to put the ring on her finger, Anna's hand trembled so violently that the ring fell to the floor and rolled away. Sanderson's face turned pale. It seemed to him like a providential dispensation. For some minutes, the assembled

company joined in the hunt for the ring. It was found at length by the yellow-haired housekeeper, who returned it with her most wolfish grin.

"Trust Bertha Harris to find things!" said the clergyman.

The ceremony proceeded without further incident. The final words were pronounced and Anna sank into a chair, relieved that it was over, whether it was for better or for worse.

Sanderson hurried her into the carriage before the clergyman and the witnesses could offer their congratulations. He pulled her away from the yellow-haired housekeeper, who would have smothered her in an embrace, and they departed without the customary handshake from the officiating clergyman.

"You were not very cordial, dear," she said, as they rolled along through the early winter landscape.

"Confound them all. I hated to see them near you"—and then, in answer to her questioning gaze—"because I love you so much, darling. I hate to see anyone touch you."

The trees were bare; the fields stretched away

brown and flat, like the folds of a shroud, and the sun was veiled by lowering clouds of gray. It was not a cheerful day for a wedding.

"Lennox, did you remember that this is Friday? And I have on a black dress."

"And now that Mrs. Lennox has settled the question of to wed or not to wed, by wedding—behold, she is worrying herself about her frock and the color of it, and the day of the week and everything else. Was there ever such a dear little goose?" He pinched her cheek, and she—she smiled up at him, her fears allayed.

"And why don't you ask where we are going, least curious of women?"

"I forgot; indeed I did."

"We are going to the White Rose Inn. Ideal name for a place in which to spend one's honeymoon, isn't it?"

"Any place would be ideal with you, Lennie," and she slipped her little hand into his ruggeder palm.

At last the White Rose Inn was sighted; it was one of those modern hostelries, built on an old English model. The windows were muslined, the

rooms were wainscoted in oak, the furniture was heavy and cumbersome. Anna was delighted with everything she saw. Sanderson had had their sitting-room filled with crimson roses, they were everywhere; banked on the mantelpiece, on the tables and window-sills. Their perfume was to Anna like the loving embrace of an old friend. Jacqueminots had been so closely associated with her acquaintance with Sanderson, in after years she could never endure their perfume and their scarlet petals unnerved her, as the sight of blood does some women.

A trim English maid came to assist "Mrs. Lennox," to unpack her things. Lunch was waiting in the sitting-room. Sanderson gave minute orders about the icing of his own particular brand of champagne, which he had had sent from Boston.

Anna had recovered her good spirits. It seemed "such a jolly lark," as her husband said.

"Sweetheart, your happiness," he said, and raised his glass to hers. Her eyes sparkled like the champagne. The honeymoon at the White Rose Tavern had begun very merrily.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE GLIMPSE OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

"The moon—the moon, so silver and cold,
Her fickle temper has oft been told,
Now shady—now bright and sunny—
But of all the lunar things that change,
The one that shows most fickle and strange,
And takes the most eccentric range
Is the moon—so called—of honey."

—*Hood.*

"My dear, will you kindly pour me a second cup of coffee? Not because I really want it, you know, but entirely for the æsthetic pleasure of seeing your pretty little hands pattering about the cups."

Lennox Sanderson, in a crimson velvet smoking jacket, was regarding Anna with the most

undisguised admiration from the other side of the round table, that held their breakfast,—their first honeymoon breakfast, as Anna supposed it to be.

"Anything to please my husband," she answered with a flitting blush.

"Your husband? Ah, say it again; it sounds awfully good from you."

"So you don't really care for any more coffee, but just want to see my hands among the cups. How appreciative you are!" And there was a mischievous twinkle in her eye as she began with great elaboration the pantomimic representation of pouring a cup of coffee, adding sugar and cream; and concluded by handing the empty cup to Sanderson. "It would be such a pity to waste the coffee, Lennie, when you only wanted to see my hands."

"If I am not going to have the coffee, I insist on both the hands," he said, taking them and kissing them repeatedly.

"I suppose I'll have to give it to you on those terms," and she proceeded to fill the cup in earnest this time.

"Let me see. How is it that you like it? One lump of sugar and quite a bit of cream? And tea perfectly clear with nothing at all and toast very crisp and dry. Dear me, how do women ever remember all their husband's likes and dislikes? It's worse than learning a new multiplication table over again," and the most adorable pucker contracted her pretty brows.

"And yet, see how beautifully widows manage it, even taking the thirty-third degree and here you are, complaining before you are initiated, and kindly remember, Mrs. Lennox Sanderson, if I take but one lump of sugar in my coffee, there are other ways of sweetening it." Presumably he got it sweetened to his satisfaction, for the proprietor of the "White Rose," who attended personally to the wants of "Mr. and Mrs. Lennox" had to cough three times before he found it discreet to enter and inquire if everything was satisfactory.

He bowed three times like a disjointed foot-rule and then retired to charge up the wear and tear to his backbone under the head of "special attendance."

"H-m-m!" sighed Sanderson, as the door closed on the bowing form of the proprietor, "that fellow's presence reminds me that we are not absolutely alone in the world, and you had almost convinced me that we were, darling, and that by special Providence, this grim old earth had been turned into a second Garden of Eden for our benefit. Aren't you going to kiss me and make me forget in earnest, this time?"

"I'm sure, Lennie, I infinitely prefer the 'White Rose Inn' with you, to the Garden of Paradise with Adam." She not only granted the request, but added an extra one for interest.

"You'll make me horribly vain, Anna, if you persist in preferring me to Adam; but then I dare say, Eve would have preferred him and Paradise to me and the 'White Rose.'"

"But, then, Eve's taste lacked discrimination. She had to take Adam or become the first girl bachelor. With me there might have been alternatives."

"There might have been others, to speak vulgarly?"

"Exactly."

"By Jove, Anna, I don't see how you ever did come to care for me!" The laughter died out of his eyes, his face grew preternaturally grave, he strode over to the window and looked out on the desolate landscape. For the first time he realized the gravity of his offense. His crime against this girl, who had been guilty of nothing but loving him too deeply stood out, stripped of its trappings of sentiment, in all its foul selfishness. He would right the wrong, confess to her; but no, he dare not, she was not the kind of woman to condone such an offense.

"Needles and pins, needles and pins, when a man's married his trouble begins," quoted Anna gayly, slipping up behind him and putting her arms about his neck; "one would think the old nursery ballad was true, to look at you, Lennox Sanderson. I never saw such a married-man expression before in my life. You wanted to know why I fell in love with you. I could not help it, because you are YOU."

She nestled her head in his shoulder and he forgot his scruples in the sorcery of her presence.

"Darling," he said, taking her in his arms, with perhaps the most geniune affection he ever felt for her, "I wish we could spend our lives here in this quiet little place, and that there were no troublesome relations or outside world demanding us."

"So do I, dear," she answered, "but it could not last; we are too perfectly happy."

Neither spoke for some mintues. At that time he loved her as deeply as it was possible for him to love anyone. Again the impulse came to tell her, beg for forgiveness and make reparation. He was holding her in his arms, considering. A moment more, and he would have given way to the only unselfish impulse in his life. But again the knock, followed by the discreet cough of the proprietor. And when he entered to tell them that the horses were ready for their drive, "Mrs. Lennox" hastened to put on her jacket and "Mr. Lennox" thanked his stars that he had not spoken.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WAYS OF DESOLATION.

"Oh! colder than the wind that freezes
Founts, that but now in sunshine play'd,
Is that congealing pang which seizes
The trusting bosom when betray'd."

—*Moore.*

FOUR months had elapsed since the honeymoon at the White Rose Tavern, and Anna was living at Waltham with her mother who grew more fretful and complaining every day. The marriage was still the secret of Anna and Sanderson. The honeymoon at the White Rose had been prolonged to a week, but no suspicion had entered the minds of Mrs. Moore or Mrs. Standish Tremont, thanks to Sanderson's skill in sending fictitious telegrams, aided by so skilled an accomplice as the "Rev." John Langdon.

Week after week, Anna had yielded to Sanderson's entreaties and kept her marriage a secret from her mother. At first he had sent her remittances of money with frequent regularity, but, lately, they had begun to fall off, his letters were less frequent, shorter and more reserved in tone, and the burden of it all was crushing the youth out of the girl and breaking her spirit. She had grown to look like some great sorrowful-eyed Madonna, and her beauty had in it more of the spiritual quality of an angel than of a woman. As the spring came on, and the days grew longer she looked like one on whom the hand of death had been laid.

Her friends noticed this, but not her mother, who was so engrossed with her own privations, that she had no time or inclination for anything else.

"Anna, Anna, to think of our coming to this!" she would wail a dozen times a day—or, "Anna, I can't stand it another minute," and she would burst into paroxysms of grief, from which nothing could arouse her, and utterly exhausted by her own emotions, which were chiefly regret and

self-pity, she would sink off to sleep. Anna had no difficulty in accounting to her mother for the extra comforts with which Lennox Sanderson's money supplied them. Mrs. Standish Tremont sometimes sent checks and Mrs. Moore never bothered about the source, so long as the luxuries were forthcoming.

"Is there no more Kumyss, Anna?" she asked one day.

"No, mother."

"Then why did you neglect to order it?"

The girl's face grew red. "There was no money to pay for it, mother. I am so sorry."

"And does Frances Tremont neglect us in this way? When we were both girls, it was quite the other way. My father practically adopted Frances Tremont. She was married from our house. But you see, Anna, she made a better marriage than I. Oh, why was your father so reckless? I warned him not to speculate in the rash way he was accustomed to doing, but he would never take my advice. If he had, we would not be as we are now." And again the poor lady was overcome with her own sorrows.

It was not Mrs. Tremont's check that had bought the last Kumyss. In fact, Mrs. Tremont, after the manner of rich relations, troubled her head but little about her poor ones. Sanderson had sent no money for nearly a month, and Anna would have died sooner than have asked for it. He had been to Waltham twice to see Anna, and once she had gone to meet him at the White Rose Tavern. Mrs. Moore, wrapped in gloom at the loss of her own luxury, had no interest in the young man who came down from Boston to call on her daughter.

"You met him at Cousin Frances's, did you say? I don't see how you can ask him here to this abominable little house. A girl should have good surroundings, Anna. Nothing detracts from a girl's beauty so much as cheap surroundings. Oh, my dear, if you had only been settled in life before all this happened, I would not complain." And, as usual, there were more tears.

But the wailings of her mother, over departed luxuries, and the poverty of her surroundings were the lightest of Anna's griefs. At their last meeting—she had gone to him in response to his

request—Sanderson's manner had struck dumb terror into the heart of the girl who had sacrificed so much at his bidding. She had been very pale. The strain of facing the terrible position in which she found herself, coupled with her own failing health, had robbed her of the beautiful color he had always so frankly admired. Her eyes were big and hollow looking, and the deep black circles about them only added to her unearthly appearance. There were drawn lines of pain about the mouth, that robbed the Cupid's bow of half its beauty.

"My God, Anna!" he had said to her impatiently. "A man might as well try to love a corpse as a woman who looks like that." He led her over to a mirror, that she might see her wasted charms. There was no need for her to look. She knew well enough what was reflected there.

"You have no right to let yourself get like this. The only thing a woman has is her looks, and it is a crime if she throws them away worrying and fretting."

"But Lennox," she answered desperately, "I

have told you how matters stand with me, and mother knows nothing—suspects nothing." And the girl broke down and wept as if her heart would break.

"Anna, for Heaven's sake, do stop crying. I hate a scene worse than anything in the world. When a woman cries, it means but one thing, and that is that the man must give in—and in this particular instance I can't give in. It would ruin me with the governor to acknowledge our marriage."

The girl's tears froze at his brutal words. She looked about dazed and hopeless.

Sanderson was standing by the window, drumming a tattoo on the pane. He wheeled about, and said slowly, as if he were feeling his way:

"Anna, suppose I give you a sum of money and you go away till all this bsuiness is over. You can tell your mother or not; just as you see fit. As far as I am concerned, it would be impossible for me to acknowledge our marriage as I have said before. If the governor found it out, he would cut me off without a cent."

"But, Lennox, I cannot leave my mother. Her health grows worse daily, and it would kill her."

"Then take her with you. She's got to know, sooner or later, I suppose. Now, don't be a stupid little girl, and everything will turn out well for us." He patted her cheek, but it was done perfunctorily, and Anna knew there was no use in making a further appeal to him.

"Well, my dear," he said, "I have got to take that 4.30 train back to Cambridge. Here is something for you, and let me know just as soon as you make up your mind, when you intend to go and where. There is no use in your staying in Waltham till those old cats begin to talk."

He put a roll of bills in her hand, kissed her and was gone, and Anna turned her tottering steps homeward, sick at heart. She must tell her mother, and the shock of it might kill her. She pressed her hands over her burning eyes to blot out the hideous picture. Could cruel fate offer bitterer dregs to young lips?

She stopped at the postoffice for mail. There was nothing but the daily paper. She took it

mechanically and turned into the little side street on which they lived.

The old family servant, who still lived with them, met her at the door, and told her that her mother had been sleeping quietly for more than an hour.

"Good gracious, Miss Anna, but you do look ill. Just step into the parlor and sit down for a minute, and I'll make you a cup of tea."

Anna suffered herself to be led into the little room, smiling gratefully at the old servant as she assisted her to remove her hat and jacket. She took up the paper mechanically and glanced through its contents. Her eyes fell on the following item, which she followed with hypnotic interest: "Harvard Student in Disgrace!" was the headline.

"John Langdon, a Harvard student, was arrested on the complaint of Bertha Harris, a young woman, well known in Boston's gas-light circles, yesterday evening. They had been dining together at a well-known chop house, when the woman, who appeared to be slightly under the in-

fluence of liquor, suddenly arose and declared that Langdon was trying to rob her.

"Both were arrested on the charge of creating a disturbance. At the State Street Police Station the woman said that Langdon had performed a mock marriage for a fellow student some four months ago. She had acted as a witness, for which service she was to receive $50. The money had never been paid. She stated further that the young man, whom Langdon is alleged to have married, is the son of a wealthy Boston banker, and the young woman who was thus deceived is a young relative of one of Boston's social leaders.

"Later Bertha Harris withdrew her charges, saying she was intoxicated when she made them. The affair has created a profound sensation."

"Mock marriage!" The words whirled before the girl's eyes in letters of fire. Bertha Harris! Yes, that was the name. It had struck her at the time when Sanderson dropped the ring. Langdon had said "Bertha Harris has found it."

The light of her reason seemed to be going out. From the blackness that engulfed her, the words

"mock marriage" rang in her ear like the cry of the drowning.

"God, oh God!" she called and the pent up agony of her wrecked life was in the cry.

They found her senseless a moment later, staring up at the ceiling with glassy eyes, the crumpled paper crushed in her hand.

"She is dead," wailed her mother. The old servant wasted no time in words. She lifted up the fragile form and laid it tenderly on the bed. Then she raised the window and called to the first passerby to run for the nearest doctor.

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

A mother's love—how sweet the name!
What is a mother's love?
—A noble, pure and tender flame,
Enkindled from above,
To bless a heart of earthly mould;
The warmest love that can grow cold;
That is a mother's love.

—*James Montgomery.*

It took all the medical skill of which the doctor was capable, and the best part of twenty-four hours of hard work to rouse Anna from the death-like lethargy into which she had fallen. Toward morning she opened her eyes and turning to her mother, said appealingly:

"Mother, you believe I am innocent, don't you?"

"Certainly, darling," Mrs. Moore replied, with

out knowing in the least to what her daughter referred. The doctor, who was present at the time, turned away. He knew more than the mother. It was one of those tragedies of every-day life that meant for the woman the fleeing away from old associations, like a guilty thing, long months of hiding, the facing of death; and, if death was not to be, the beginning of life over again branded with shame. And all this bitter injustice because she had loved much and had faith in the man she loved. The doctor had faced tragedies before in his professional life, but never had he felt his duty so heavily laid upon him as when he begged Mrs. Moore for a few minutes' private conversation in the gray dawn of that early morning.

He felt that the life of his patient depended on his preparing her mother for the worst. The girl, he knew, would probably confess all during her convalescence, and the mother must be prepared, so that the first burst of anguish would have expended itself before the girl should have a chance to pour out the story of her misfortune.

"Tell me, doctor, is she going to die?" the

mother asked, as she closed the door of the little sitting-room and they were alone. The poor lady had not thought of her own misfortunes since Anna's illness. The selfishness of the woman of the world was completely obliterated by the anxiety of the mother.

"No, she will not die, Mrs. Moore; that is, if you are able to control your feelings sufficiently, after I have made a most distressing disclosure, to give her the love and sympathy that only you can."

She looked at him with troubled eyes. "Why, doctor, what do you mean? My daughter has always had my love and sympathy, and if of late I have appeared somewhat engrossed by my own troubles, I assure you my daughter is not likely to suffer from it during her illness."

"Her life depends on how you receive what I am going to tell you. Should you upbraid her with her misfortune, or fail to stand by her as only a mother can, I shall not answer for the consequences." Then he told her Anna's secret.

The stricken woman did not cry out in her anguish, nor swoon away. She raised a feebly pro-

testing hand, as if to ward off a cruel blow; then burying her face in her arms, she cowed before him. Not a sob shook the frail, wasted figure. It was as if this most terrible misfortune had dried up the well-springs of grief and robbed her of the blessed gift of tears. The woman who in one brief year had lost everything that life held dear to her—husband, home, wealth, position—everything but this one child, could not believe the terrible sentence that had been pronounced against her. Her Anna—her little girl! Why, she was only a child! Oh, no, it could not be true. She never, never would believe it.

Her brain whirled and seemed to stop. It refused to grasp so hideous a proposition. The doctor was momentarily at a loss to know how to deal with this terrible dry-eyed grief. The set look in her eyes, the terrible calm of her demeanor were so much more alarming than the wildest outpurings of grief would have been.

"And this seizure, Mrs. Moore. Tell me exactly how it was brought about," thinking to turn the current of her thoughts even for a moment.

She told him how Anna had gone out in the

early afternoon, without saying where she was going, and how she had returned to the house about five o'clock, looking so pale and ill, that Hannah, an old family servant who still lived with them, noticed it and begged her to sit down while she went to fetch her a cup of tea. The maid left her sitting by the fire-place reading a paper, and the next thing was the terrible cry that brought them both. They found her lying on the floor unconscious with the crumpled newspaper in her hand.

"See, here is the paper now, doctor," and he stooped to pick up the crumpled sheet from which the girl had read her death warrant. Together they went over it in the hope that it might furnish some clue. Mrs. Moore's eyes were the first to fall on the fatal paragraph. She read it through, then showed it to the doctor.

"That is undoubtedly the cause of the seizure," said the doctor.

"Oh, my poor, poor darling," moaned the mother, and the first tears fell.

In the first bitterness of regret, Mrs. Moore imagined that in selfishly abandoning herself to

her own grief, she must have neglected her daughter, and her remorse knew no bounds. Again and again she bitterly denounced herself for giving way to sorrow that now seemed light and trivial, compared to the black hopelessness of the present.

Anna's mind wandered in her delirium, and she would talk of her marriage and beg Sanderson to let her tell her mother all. Then she would fancy that she was again with Mrs. Tremont and she would go through the pros and cons of the whole affair. Should she marry him secretly, as he wished? Yes, it would be better for poor mama, who needed so many comforts, but was it right? And then the passionate appeal to Sanderson. Couldn't he realize her position?——

"Yes, darling, it is all right. Mother understands," the heartbroken woman would repeat over and over again, but the sick girl could not hear.

And so the days wore on, till at last Anna's wandering mind turned back to earth, and again took up the burden of living. There was nothing for her to tell her mother. In her delirium she

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had told all, and the mother was prepared to bravely face the worst for her daughter's sake.

The terrible blow brought mother and daughter closer together than they had been for years. In their prosperity, the young girl had been busy with her governess and instructors, while her mother had made a fine art of her invalidism and spent the greater part of her time at health resorts, baths and spas.

By mutual consent, they decided that it was better not to attempt to seek redress from Sanderson. Anna's letters, written during her convalescence, had remained unanswered, and any effort to force him, either by persuasion or process of law, to right the terrible wrong he had done, was equally repulsive to both mother and daughter.

Mrs. Standish Tremont was also equally out of the question, as a court of final appeal. She had been so piqued with Anna for interfering with her most cherished plans regarding Sanderson and Grace Tremont, that Anna knew well enough that there would only be further humiliation in seeking mercy from that quarter.

So mother and daughter prepared to face the inevitable alone. To this end, Mrs. Moore sold the last of her jewelry. She had kept it, thinking that Anna would perhaps marry some day and appreciate the heirlooms; but such a contingent was no longer to be considered, and the jewelry, and the last of the family silver, were sent to be sold, together with every bit of furniture with which they could dispense, and mother and daughter left the little cottage in Waltham, and went to the town of Belden, New Hampshire,—a place so inconceivably remote, that there was little chance of any of their former friends being able to trace them, even if they should desire to do so.

As the summer days grew shorter, and the hour of Anna's ordeal grew near, Mrs. Moore had but one prayer in her heart, and that was that her life might be spared till her child's troubles were over. Since Anna's illness in the early spring, she had utterly disregarded herself. No complaint was heard to pass her lips. Her time was spent in one unselfish effort to make her daughter's life less painful. But the strain of it was

telling, and she knew that life with her was but the question of weeks, perhaps days. As her physical grasp grew weaker, her mental hold increased proportionately, and she determined to live till she had either closed her child's eyes in death, or left her with something for which to struggle, as she herself was now struggling.

But the poor mother's last wish was not to be granted. In the beginning of September, just when the earth was full of golden promise of autumn, she felt herself going. She felt the icy hand of death at her heart and the grim destroyer whispered in her ear: "Make ready." Oh, the anguish of going just then, when she was needed so sorely by her deceived and deserted child.

"Anna, darling," she called feebly, "I cannot be with you; I am going—I have prayed to stay, but it was not to be. Your child will comfort you, darling. There is nothing like a child's love, Anna, to make a woman forget old sorrows—kiss me, dear——" She was gone.

And so Anna was to go down into the valley of the shadow of death alone, and among strangers.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN DAYS OF WAITING.

"Bent o'er her babe, her eyes dissolved in dew,
The big drops mingled with the milk he drew
Gave the sad presage of his future years—
The child of misery, baptized in tears."

—*John Langhorne.*

THE days of Anna's waiting lagged. She lost all count of time and season. Each day was painfully like its predecessor, a period of time to be gone through with, as best she could. She realized after her mother's death what the gentle companionship had been to her, what a prop the frail mother had become in her hour of need. For a great change had come over the querulous invalid with the beginning of her daughter's troubles, the grievances of the woman of the world were forgotten in the anxiety of the mother, and

never by look or word did she chide her daughter, or make her affliction anything but easier to bear by her gentle presence.

Anna, sunk in the stupor of her own grief, did not realize the comfort of her mother's presence until it was too late. She shrank from the strangers with whom they made their little home —a middle aged shopkeeper and his wife, who had been glad enough to rent them two unused rooms in their house at a low figure. They were not lacking in sympathy for young "Mrs. Lennox," but their disposition to ask questions made Anna shun them as she would have an infection. After her mother's death, they tried harder than ever to be kind to her, but the listless girl, who spent her days gazing at nothing, was hardly aware of their comings and goings.

"If you would only try to eat a bit, my dear," said the corpulent Mrs. Smith, bustling into Anna's room. "And land sakes, don't take on so. There you set in that chair all day long. Just rouse yourself, my dear; there ain't no trouble, however bad, but could be wuss."

To this dismal philosophy, Anna would return

a wan smile, while she felt her heart almost break within her.

"And, Mrs. Lennox, don't mind what I say to you. I am old enough to be your grandmother, but if you have quarreled with any one, don't be too spunky now about making up. Spunk is all right in its place, but its place ain't at the bedside of a young woman who's got to face the trial of her life. If you have quarreled with any one —your—your husband, say, now is the time to make it up, since your ma is gone."

The old woman looked at her with a strange mixture of motherliness and curiosity. As she said to her husband a dozen times a day, "her heart just ached for that pore young thing upstairs," but this tender solicitude did not prevent her ears from aching, at the same time, to hear Anna's story.

"Thank you very much for your kind interest, Mrs. Smith; but really, you must let me judge of my own affairs." There was a dignity about the girl that brooked no further interference.

"That's right, my dear, and I wouldn't have thought of suggesting it, but you do seem that

young—well, I must be going down to put the potatoes on for dinner. If you want anything, just ring your bell."

There was not the least resentment cherished by the corpulent Mrs. Smith. The girl's answer confirmed her opinion from the first. "She would not send for her husband, because there wasn't no husband to send for." She mentioned her convictions to her husband and added she meant to write to sister Eliza that very night.

"Sister Eliza has an uncommon light hand with babies and that pore young thing'll be hard pushed to pay the doctor, let alone a nurse."

These essentially feminine details regarding the talents of Sister Eliza, did not especially interest Smith, who continued his favorite occupation—or rather, joint occupations, of whittling and expectorating. Nevertheless, the letter to Sister Eliza was written, and not a minute sooner than was necessary; for, the little soul that was to bring with it forgetfulness for all the agony through which its mother had lived during that awful year, came very soon after the arrival of Sister Eliza.

Anna had felt in those days of waiting that she could never again be happy; that for her "finis" had been written by the fates. But, as she lay with the dark-haired baby on her breast, she found herself planning for the little girl's future; even happy in the building of those heavenly air-castles that young mothers never weary of building. She felt the necessity of growing strong so that she could work early and late, for baby must have everything, even if mother went without. Sometimes a fleeting likeness to Sanderson would flit across the child's face, and a spasm of pain would clutch at Anna's heart, but she would forget it next moment in one of baby's most heavenly smiles.

She could think of him now without a shudder; even a lingering remnant of tenderness would flare up in her heart when she remembered he was the baby's father. Perhaps he would see the child sometime, and her sweet baby ways would plead to him more eloquently than could all her words to right the wrong he had done, and so the days slipped by and the little mother was happy, after the long drawn out days of waiting and misery.

She would sing the baby to sleep in her low contralto voice, and feel that it mattered not whether the world smiled or frowned on her, so long as baby approved.

But this blessed state of affairs was not long to continue. Anna, as she grew stronger, felt the necessity of seeking employment, but to this the baby proved a formidable obstacle. No one would give a young woman, hampered with a child, work. She would come back to the baby at night worn out in mind and body, after a day of fruitless searching. These long trips of the little mother, with the consequent long absence and exhaustion on her return, did not improve the little one's health, and almost before Anna realized it was ailing, the baby sickened and died. It was her cruelest blow. For the child's sake she had taken up her interest in life, made plans, and was ready to work her fingers to the bone, but it was not to be and with the first falling of the clods on the little coffin, Anna felt the last ray of hope extinguished from her heart.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF SHELTER.

Alas! To-day I would give everything
To see a friend's face, or hear voice
That had the slightest tone of comfort in it.
—*Longfellow.*

ABOUT two miles from the town of Belden, N. H., stands an irregular farm house that looks more like two dwellings forced to pass as one. One part of it is all gables, and tile, and chimney corners, and antiquity, and the other is square, slated, and of the newest cut, outside and in.

The farm is the property of Squire Amasa Bartlett, a good type of the big man of the small place. He was a contented and would have been a happy man—or at least thought he would have been—if the dearest wish of his life could have been realized. It was that his son, Dave, and his

wife's niece, Kate, should marry. Kate was an orphan and the Squire's ward. She owned the adjoining land, that was farmed with the Squire's as one. So that Cupid would not have come to them empty handed; but the young people appeared to have little interest in each other apart from that cousinly affection which young people who are brought together would in all probability feel for each other.

Dave was a handsome, dark-eyed young man, whose silence passed with some for sulkiness; but he was not sulky—only deep and thoughtful, and perhaps a little more devoid of levity than becomes a young man of twenty-five. He had great force of character—you might have seen that from his grave brow, and felt it in his simple speech and manner, that was absolutely free from affectation.

Dave was his mother's idol, but his utter lack of worldliness, his inability to drive a shrewd bargain sometimes annoyed his father, who was a just, but an undeniably hard man, who demanded a hundred cents for his dollar every day in the year.

Kate, whom the family circle hoped would one day be David's wife, was all blonde hair, blue eyes and high spirits, so that the little blind god, aided by the Squire's strategy, propinquity and the universal law of the attraction of opposites, should have had no difficulty in making these young people fall in love—but Destiny, apparently, decided to make them exceptions to all rules.

Kate was fond of going to Boston to visit a schoolmate, and the Squire, who looked with small favor on these visits, was disposed to attribute them to Dave's lack of ardor.

"Confound it, Looizy," he would say to his wife, "if Dave made it more lively for Kate she would not be fer flying off to Boston every time she got a chance."

And Mrs. Bartlett had no answer. Having a woman's doubtful gift of intuition, she was afraid that the wedding would never take place, and also having a woman's tact she never annoyed her husband by saying so.

Kate, who had been in Boston for two months, was coming home about the middle of July, and

a little flutter of preparation went all over the farm.

Dave had said at breakfast that he regretted not being able to go to Wakefield to meet Kate, but that he would be busy in the north field all day. Hi Holler, the Bartlett chore boy, had been commissioned to go in his stead, and Hi's toilet, in consequence, had occupied most of the morning.

Mrs. Bartlett was churning in the shadow of the wide porch, the Squire was mending a horse collar with wax thread, and fussing about the heat and the slowness of Hi Holler, who was always punctually fifteen mintues late for everything.

"Confound it, Looizy, what's keeping that boy; the train'll get in before he's started. Here you, Hi, what's keeping you?"

The delinquent stood in the doorway, his broad face rippling with smiles; he had spent time on his toilet, but he felt that the result justified it.

His high collar had already begun to succumb to the day, and the labor involved in greasing his boots, which were much in evidence, owing to the brevity of the white duck trousers that needed

but one or two more washings, with the accompanying process of shrinking, to convert them into knickerbockers. Bear's grease had turned his ordinary curling brown hair into a damp, shining mass that dripped in tiny rills, from time to time, down on his coat collar, but Hi was happy. Beau Brummel, at the height of his sartorial fame, never achieved a more self-satisfying toilet.

The Squire adjusted his spectacles. "What are you dressing up like that on a week day for, Hi? Off with you now; and if you ain't in time for them cars you'll catch 'Hail Columbia' when you get back."

"Looizy," said the Squire, as soon as Hi was out of hearing, "why didn't Dave go after Katie? Yes, I know about the hay. Hay is hay, but it ought not to come first in a man's affections."

"You'd better let 'em alone, Amasy; if they're going to marry they will without any help from us; love affairs don't seem to prosper much, when old folks interfere."

"Looizy, it's my opinion that Dave's too shy to make up to women folks. I don't think he'll even get up the courage to ask Kate to marry him."

"Well, I never saw the man yet who was too bashful to propose to the right woman." And a great deal of decision went into the churning that accompanied her words.

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," said the Squire. He felt that the vagaries of the affections was too deep a subject for him. "Anyhow, Looizy, I don't want no old maids and bachelors potterin' round this farm getting cranky notions in their heads. Look at the professor. Why, a good woman would have taken the nonsense out of him years ago."

Mrs. Bartlett did not have to go far to look at the professor. He was flying about her front garden at that very moment in an apparently distracted state, crouching, springing, hiding back of bushes and reappearing with the startling swiftness of magic. The Bartletts were quite used to these antics on the part of their well-paying summer boarder. He was chasing butterflies—a manifestly insane proceeding, of course, but if a man could afford to pay ten dollars a week for summer board in the State of New Hampshire, he could afford to chase butterflies.

Professor Sterling was an old young man who had given up his life to entomology; his collection of butterflies was more vital to him than any living issue; the Bartletts regarded him as a mild order of lunatic, whose madness might have taken a more dangerous form than making up long names for every-day common bugs.

"Look at him, just look at him, Looizy, sweating himself a day like this, over a common dusty miller. It beats all, and with his money."

"Well, it's a harmless amusement," said the kindly Louisa, "there's a heap more harmful things that a man might chase than butterflies."

The stillness of the midsummer day was broken by the sound of far-off singing. It came in full-toned volume across the fields, the high soaring of women's voices blended with the deeper harmony of men's.

"What's that?" said the Squire testily, looking in the direction of the strawberry beds, from whence the singing came.

"It's only the berry-pickers, father," said David, coming through the field gate and going over to the well for a drink.

"I wish they'd work more and sing less," said the Squire. "All this singing business is too picturesque for me."

"They've about finished, father. I came for the money to pay them off."

It was characteristic of Dave to uphold the rights of the berry-pickers. They were all friends of his, young men and women who sang in the village choir and who went out among their neighbors' berry patches in summer, and earned a little extra money in picking the fruit. The village thought only the more of them for their thrift, and their singing at the close of their work was generally regarded in the light of a favor. Zeke, Sam, Cynthia and Amelia who formed the quartet, had all fine voices and no social function for miles around Wakefield was complete without their music.

The Squire said no more about the berry-pickers. Dave handed him a paper on which the time of each berry-picker and the amount of his or her wage was marked opposite. The Squire took it and adjusted his glasses with a certain grimness

—he was honest to the core, but few things came harder to him than parting with money.

Dave and his mother at the churn exchanged a friendly wink. The extracting of coin from the head of the house was no easy process. Mother and son both enjoyed its accomplishment through an otuside agency. It was too hard a process in the home circle to be at all agreeable.

While the Squire was wrestling with his arithmetic, Dave noticed a strange girl pass by the outer gate, pause, go on and then return. He looked at her with deep interest. She was so pale and tired-looking it seemed as if she had not strength enough left to walk to the house. Her long lashes rested wearily on the pale cheeks. She lifted them with an effort, and Dave found himself staring eagerly in a pair of great, sorrowful brown eyes.

The girl came on unsteadily up the walk to where the Squire sat, thumbing his account to the berry-pickers. "Well, girl, who are you?" he said, not as unkindly as the words might imply.

The sound of her own voice, as she tried to answer his question, was like the far-off droning

"MY NAME IS ANNA MOORE—I AM LOOKING FOR WORK."—Page 83.

of a river. It did not seem to belong to her. "My name is Moore—Anna Moore—and I thought—I hoped perhaps you might be good enough to give me work." The strange faces spun about her eyes. She tottered and would have fallen if Dave had not caught her.

Dave, the silent, the slow of action, the cool-headed, seemed suddenly bereft of his chilling serenity. "Here, mother, a chair; father, some water, quick." He carried the swooning girl to the shadow of the porch and fanned her tenderly with his broad-brimmed straw hat.

The old people hastened to do his bidding. Dave, excited and issuing orders in that tone, was too unusual to be pased over lightly.

"What were you going to say, Miss Moore?" said the Squire as soon as the brown eyes opened.

"I thought, perhaps, I might find something to do here—I'm looking for work."

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Bartlett, smoothing the dark curls, "you are not fit to stand, let alone work."

"You could not earn your salt," was the

Squire's less sympathetic way of expressing the same sentiment. "Where is your home?"

"I have no home." She looked at them desperately, her dark eyes appealing to one and the other, as if they were the jury that held her life in the balance. Only one pair of eyes seemed to hold out any hope.

"If you would only try me I could soon prove to you that I am not worthless." Unconsciously she held out her hand in entreaty.

"Here we are, here we are, all off for Boston!" The voice was Hi's. He was just turning in at the field gate with Kate beside him. Kate, a ravishing vision, in pink muslin; a smiling, contented vision of happy, rosy girlhood, coming back to the home-nest, where a thousand welcomes awaited her.

"Hello, every one!" she said, running in and kissing them in turn, "how nice it is to be home."

They forgot the homeless stranger and her pleading for shelter in their glad welcome to the daughter of the house. She had shrunk back into the shadow. She had never felt the desolation,

the utter loneliness of her position so keenly before.

"Hurrah for Kate!" cried the Squire, and everyone took it up and gave three cheers for Kate Brewster.

The wanderer withdrew into the deepest shadow of the porch, that her alien presence might not mar the joyous home-coming of Kate Brewster. There was no jealousy in her soul for the fair girl who had such a royal welcome back to the home-nest. She would not have robbed her of it if such a thing had been possible, but the sense of her own desolation gripped at the heart like an iron band.

She waited like a mendicant to beg for the chance of earning her bread. That was all she asked—the chance to work, to eat the bread of independence, and yet she knew how slim the chance was. She had been wandering about seeking employment all day, and no one would give it.

Only Dave had not forgotten the stranger in the joy of Kate's home-coming. He had welcomed the flurry of excitement to say a few

words to his mother, his sworn ally in all the little domestic plots.

"Mother," he said, "do contrive to keep that girl. It would be nothing short of murder to turn her out on the highway."

A pressure of the motherly hand assured Dave that he could rely on her support.

"Well, well, Katie," said the Squire with his arm around his niece's waist, "the old place has been lonely without you!"

"Uncle, who is that girl on the porch?" she asked in an undertone.

"That we don't know; says her name is Moore, and that she wants work. Kind of sounds like a fairy story, don't it, Kate?"

"Poor thing, poor thing!" was Kate's only answer.

"Amasy," said Mrs. Bartlett, assuming all the courage of a rabbit about to assert itself, "this family is bigger than it was with Kate home and the professor here, and I am not getting younger —I want you to let me keep this young woman to help me about the house."

The Squire set his jaw, always an ominous sign

to his family. "I don't like this takin' strangers, folks we know nothing about; it's mighty suspicious to see a young woman tramping around the country, without a home, looking for work. I don't like it."

The girl, who sat apart while these strangers considered taking her in, as if she had been a friendless dog, arose, her eyes were full of unshed tears, her voice quivered, but pride supported her. Turning to the Squire, she said:

"You are suspicious because you are blest with both home and family. My mother died a few months ago, I myself have been ill. I make this explanation not because your kindness warrants it, sir, but because your family would have been willing to take me on faith." She bowed her head in the direction of Mrs. Bartlett and Dave.

"Well," the Squire interrupted, "you need not go away hungry, you can stop here and eat your dinner, and then Hi Holler can take you in the wagon to the place provided for such unfortunate cases, and where you'll have food and shelter."

"The poor farm, do you mean?" the girl said,

wildly; "no, no; if you will not give me work I will not take your charity."

"Father!" exclaimed Dave and his mother together.

"Now, now," said Kate, going up to the Squire and putting her hands on his shoulders, "it seems to me as if my uncle's been getting a little hard while I've been away from home, and I don't think it has improved him a bit. The uncle I left here had a heart as big as a house. What has he done with it?"

Here the professor came to Kate's aid. "Squire," said he, "isn't it written that 'If ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto me?' "

"Well, well," said the Squire, "when a man's family are against him, there's only one thing for him to do if he wants any peace of mind, and that is to come round to their way, and I ain't never goin' to have it said I went agin the *Scripter.*" He went over to Anna and took her pale, thin hand in his great brown one.

"Well, little woman, they want you to stay, and I am not going to interfere. I leave it to you that I won't live to regret it."

This time the tears splashed down the pale cheeks. "Dear sir, I thank you, and I promise you shall never repent this kindess." Then turning to the rest—"I thank you all. I can only repay you by doing my best."

"Well said, well said," and Kate gave her a sisterly pat on the shoulder.

Anna would not listen to Mrs. Bartlett's kind suggestion that she should rest a little while. She went immediately to the house, removed her hat, and returned completely enveloped in a big gingham apron that proved wonderfully becoming to her dark beauty—or was it that the homeless, hunted look had gone out of those sorrowful eyes?

And so Anna Moore had found a home at last, one in which she would have to work early and late to retain a foothold—but still a home, and the word rang in her ears like a soothing song, after the anguish of the last year. Her youth and beauty, she had long since discovered, were only barriers to the surroundings she sought. There had been many who offered to help the friendless girl, but their offers were such that

death seemed preferable, by contrast, and Anna had gone from place to place, seeking only the right to earn her bread, and yet, finding only temptation and danger.

Dave, passing out to the barn, stopped for a moment to regard her, as she sat on the lowest step of the porch, with her sleeves rolled above the elbow, working a bowl of butter. He smiled at her encouragingly—it was well that none of his family saw it. Such a smile from the shy, silent Dave might have been a revelation to the home circle.

CHAPTER X.

ANNA AND SANDERSON AGAIN MEET.

"Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turn'd
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorn'd."

—*Congreve.*

"And who be you, with those big brown eyes, sitting on the Bartlett's porch working that butter as if you've been used to handling butter all your life? No city girl, I'm sure." Anna had been at the Squire's for a week when the above query was put to her.

The voice was high and rasping. The whole sentence was delivered without breath or pause, as if it was one long word. The speaker might have been the old maid as portrayed in the illustrated weekly. Nothing was lacking—corkscrew curls, prunella boots, cameo brooch and chain, a gown of the antiquated Redingote type, trimmed

with many small ruffles and punctuated, irrelevantly, with immovable buttons.

"I am Anna Moore."

"Know as much now as I ever did," snapped the interlocutor.

"I have come to work for Mrs. Bartlett, to help her about the house."

"Land sakes. Bartlett's keeping help! How stylish they're getting."

"Yes, Marthy, we are progressing," said Kate, coming out of the house. "Anna, this is our friend, Miss Marthy Perkins."

The village gossip's confusion was but momentary. "Do you know, Kate, I just came over a-purpose to see if you'd come. What kind of clothes are they wearing in Boston? Are shirtwaists going to have tucked backs or plain? I am going to make over my gray alpaca, and I wouldn't put the scissors into it till I seen you."

"Come upstairs, Marthy, and I'll show you my new shirtwaists."

"Land sakes," said the spinster, bridling. "I would be delighted, but you know how I can't move without that Seth Holcomb a-taggin' after

me; it's just awful the way I am persecuted. I do wish I'd get old and then there'd be an end of it." She held out a pair of mittens, vintage of 1812, to Kate, appealingly.

Seth Holcomb stumped in sight as she concluded; he had been Martha's faithful admirer these twenty years, but she would never reward him; her hopes of younger and less rheumatic game seemed to spring eternal.

During the few days that Anna had made one of the Squire's family she went about with deep thankfulness in her heart; she had been given the chance to work, to earn her bread by these good people. Who could tell—as time went on perhaps they would grow fond of her, learn to regard her as one of themselves—it was so much better than being so utterly alone.

Her energy never flagged, she did her share of the work with the light hand of experience that delighted the old housekeeper. It was so good to feel a roof over her head, and to feel that she was earning her right to it.

Supper had been cooked, the table laid and everything was in readiness for the family meal,

but the old clock wanted five minutes of the hour; the girl came out into the glowing sunset to draw a pail of water from the old well, but paused to enjoy the scene. Purple, gold and crimson was the mantle of the departing day; and all her crushed and hopeless youth rose, cheered by its glory.

"Thank God," she murmured fervently, "at last I have found a refuge. I am beginning life again. The shadow of the old one will rest on me forever, but time and work, the cure for every grief, will cure me."

Her eyes had been turned toward the west, where the day was going out in such a riot of splendor, and she had not noticed the man who entered the gate and was making his way toward her, flicking his boots with his riding crop as he walked.

She turned suddenly at the sound of steps on the gravel; in the gathering darkness neither could see nor recognize the other till they were face to face.

The woman's face blanched, she stifled an exclamation of horror and stared at him.

"You! you here!"

It was Lennox Sanderson, and the sight of him, so suddenly, in this out-of-the-way place, made her reel, almost fainting against the well-curb.

He grabbed her arm and shook her roughly, and said, "What are you doing here, in this place?"

"I am trying to earn my living. Go, go," she whispered.

"Do you think I came here after you?" he sneered. "I've come to see the Squire." All the selfishness and cowardice latent in Sanderson's character were reflected in his face, at that moment, destroying its natural symmetry, disfiguring it with tell-tale lines, and showing him at his par value—a weak, contemptible libertine, brought to bay.

This meeting with his victim after all these long months of silence, in this remote place, deprived him, momentarily, of his customary poise and equilibrium. Why was she here? Would she denounce him to these people? What effect would it have? were some of the questions that

whirled through his brain as they stood together in the gathering twilight.

But the shrinking look in her eyes allayed his fears. He read terror in every line of her quivering figure, and in the frantic way she clung to the well-curb to increase the space between them. She, with the right to accuse, unconsciously took the attitude of supplication. The man knew he had nothing to fear, and laid his plans accordingly.

"I don't believe you've come here to look for work," he said, stooping over the crouching figure. "You've come here to make trouble—to hound the life out of me."

"My hope in coming here was that I might never see you again. What could I want of you, Lennox Sanderson?"

The measured contempt of her tones was not without its effect. He winced perceptibly, but his coarse instincts rallied to his help and again he began to bully:

"Spare me the usual hard-luck story of the deceived young woman trying to make an honest living. If you insist on drudging, it's your own

fault. I offered to take care of you and provide for your future, but you received my offers of assistance with a 'Villain-take-your-gold' style, that I was not prepared to accept. If, as you say, you never wish to see me again, what is simpler than to go away?"

His cold-blooded indifference, his utter withdrawal from the calamity he had brought upon her, his airy suggestion that she should go because it suited his pleasure to remain, maddened Anna. The blood rushed to her pale cheeks and there came her old conquering beauty with it. She eyed him with equal defiance.

"I shall not go, because it does not suit me." And then wavering a little at the thought of her wretched experience—"I had too much trouble finding a place where an honest home is offered for honest work, to leave this one for your whim. No, I shall not go."

They heard footsteps moving about the house. A lamp shone out from the dining-room window. The Squire's voice, inquiring for Kate, came across to them on the still summer air. They looked into each other's pale, determined faces.

Which would yield? It was the old struggle between the sexes—a struggle old as earth, unsettled as chaos.

Which should yield? The man who had sinned much, or the woman who had loved much?

Sanderson employed all the force of his brutality to frighten Anna into yielding. "See here," and he caught her arm in no uncertain grasp. "You've got to go. You can't stay here in the same place with me. If money is what you want, you shall have it; but you've got to go. Do you understand? *Go!*"

He had emphasized his words by tightening the grip on her arm, and the pain of it well nigh made her cry out. He relaxed his hold just as Hi Holler came out on the porch, seized the supper horn and blew it furiously. The Squire came down and looked amazed at the smartly dressed young city man talking to Anna.

"Squire," she said, taking the initiative, "this gentleman is inquiring for you."

On hearing the Squire's footsteps, Sanderson turned to him with all the cordiality at his command, and, slapping him on the back, said: "Hel-

SANDERSON—"YOU'VE GOT TO GO."—Page 98.

lo, Squire, I've just ridden over to talk to you about your prize Jersey heifer." The Squire had only met Sanderson once or twice before, and that was prior to Kate's visit to Boston; but he knew all about the young man who had become his neighbor.

Lennox Sanderson was a lucky fellow, and while waiting impatiently for his father to start him in life, his uncle, the judge, died and mentioned no one but Lennox Sanderson in his will.

The Squire had known the late Judge Sanderson, the "big man" of the county, very well, and lost no time in cultivating the acquaintance of the judge's nephew, who had fallen heir to the fine property the judge had accumulated, no small part of which was the handsome "country seat" of the judge in the neighborhood.

That is how this fine young city man happened to drop in on the Squire so unceremoniously. He had learned of Kate's return from Boston and was hastening to pay his respects to the pretty girl. To say he was astounded to find Anna on the spot is putting it mildly. He believed she had learned of his good fortune and

had followed him, to make disagreeable exactions. It put him in a rage and it cost him a strong effort to conceal it before the Squire.

"Walk right in," said the Squire, beaming with hospitality. Sanderson entered and the girl found herself alone in the twilight. Anna sat on the bench by the well-curb and faced despair. She was physically so weak from her long and recent illness that the unexpected interview with Sanderson left her faint and exhausted. The momentary flare up of her righteous indignation at Sanderson's outrageous proposition that she should go away had sapped her strength and she made ready to meet one of the great crises of life with nerveless, trembling body and a mind incapable of action.

She pressed her throbbing head on the cool stones of the well-curb and prayed for light. What could she do—where could she go? Her fate rose up before her like a great stone prison wall at which she beat with naked bleeding hand and the stones still stood in all their mightiness.

How could she cope with such heartless cruelty as that of Sanderson? All that she had asked for

was an honest roof in return for honest toil. And there are so few such, thought the helpless girl, remembering with awful vividness her efforts to find work and the pitfalls and barriers that had been put in her way, often in the guise of friendly interest.

She could not go out and face it all over again. It was so bleak—so bleak. There seemed to be no place in the great world that she could fill, no one stood in need of her help, no one required her services. They had no faith in her story that she was looking for work and had no home.

"What, a good-looking young girl like you! What, no home? No, no; we don't need you," or the other frightful alternative.

And yet she must go. Sanderson was right. She could not stay where he was. She must go. But where?

She could hear his voice in the dining-room, entertaining them all with his inimitable gift of story-telling. And then, their laughter—peal on peal of it—and his voice cutting in, with its well-bred modulation: "Yes, I thought it was a pretty good story myself, even if the joke was on me."

And again their laughter and applause. She had no weapons with which to fight such cold-blooded selfishness. To stay meant eternal torture. She saw herself forced to face his complacent sneer day after day and death on the roadside seemed preferable.

She tried to face the situation in all its pitiful reality, but the injustice of it cried out for vengeance and she could not think. She could only bury her throbbing temples in her hands and murmur over and over again: "It is all wrong."

David found her thus, as he made his way to the house from the barn, where he had been detained later than the others. When he saw her forlorn little figure huddled by the well-curb in an attitude of absolute dejection, he could not go on without saying some word of comfort.

"Miss Anna," he said very gently, "I hope you are not going to be homesick with us."

She lifted a pale, tear-stained face, on which the lines of suffering were written far in advance of her years.

"It does not matter, Mr. David," she answered him, "I am going away."

"No, no, you are not going to do anything of the kind," he said gently; "the work seems hard to-day because it is new, but in a day or two you will become accustomed to it, and to us. We may seem a bit hard and unsympathetic; I can see you are not used to our ways of living, and looking at things, but we are sincere, and we want you to stay with us; indeed, we do."

She gave him a wealth of gratitude from her beautiful brown eyes. "It is not that I find the place hard, Mr. David. Every one has been so kind to me that I would be glad to stay, but—but——"

He did not press her for her reason. "You have been ill, I believe you said?"

"Yes, very ill indeed, and there are not many who would give work to a delicate girl. Oh, I am sorry to go——" She broke off wildly, and the tears filled her eyes.

"Miss Anna, when one is ill, it's hard to know what is best. Don't make up your mind just yet. Stay for a few days and give us a trial, and just call on me when you want a bucket of water or anything else that taxes your strength."

She tried to answer him but could not. They were the first words of real kindness, after all these months of sorrow and loneliness, and they broke down the icy barrier that seemed to have enclosed her heart. She bent her head and wept silently.

"There, there, little woman," he said, patting her shoulder when he would have given anything to put his arm around her and offer her the devotion of his life. But Dave had a good bit of hard common sense under his hat, and he knew that such a declaration would only hasten her departure and the wise young man continued to be brotherly, to urge her to stay for his mother's sake, and because it was so hard for a young woman to find the proper kind of a home, and really she was not a good judge of what was best for her.

And Anna, whose storm-swept soul was so weary of beating against the rocks, listened and made up her mind to enjoy the wholesome companionship of these good people, for a little while at least.

CHAPTER XI.

RUSTIC HOSPITALITY.

"Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crowned,
Where all the ruddy family around
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale."

—*Goldsmith.*

SANDERSON'S clothes, his manner, his slightly English accent, were all so many items in a good letter of credit to those simple people. The Squire was secretly proud at having a city man like young Sanderson for a neighbor. It would unquestionably add tone to Wakefield society.

Kate regarded him with the frank admiration of a young woman who appreciates a smart appearance, good manner, and the indefinable something that goes to make up the ensemble of the man of the world. He could say nothing, clev-

erly; he had little subleties of manner that put the other men she had met to poor advantage beside him. On the night in question the Squire was giving a supper in honor of the berry-pickers who had helped to gather in the crop the week before. Afterwards, they would sing the sweet, homely songs that all the village loved, and then troop home by moonlight to the accompaniment of their own music.

"Well, Mr. Sanderson," said the Squire, "suppose you stay to supper with us. See, we've lots of good company"—and he waved his hand, indicating the different groups, "and we'll talk about the stock afterwards."

He accepted their invitation to supper with flattering alacrity; they were so good to take pity on a solitaire, and Mrs. Bartlett was such a famous housekeeper; he had heard of her apple-pies in Boston. Dave scented patronage in his "citified" air; he and other young men at the table—young men who helped about the farm—resented everything about the stranger from the self-satisfied poise of his head to the aggressive gloss on his riding-boots.

"Why, Dave," said Kate to her cousin in an undertone, "you look positively fierce. If I had a particle of vanity I should say you were jealous."

"When I get jealous, Kate, it will be of a man, not of a tailor's sign."

"Say, Miss Kate," said Hi Holler, "they're a couple of old lengths of stove-pipes out in the loft; I'm going to polish 'em up for leggins. Darned if I let any city dude get ahead o' me."

"The green-eyed monster is driving you all crazy," laughed Kate, in great good humor. "The girls don't seem to find any fault with him." Cynthia and Amelia were both regarding him with admiring glances.

Dave turned away in some impatience. Involuntarily his eyes sought out Anna Moore to see if she, too, was adding her quota of admiration to the stranger's account. But Anna had no eyes or ears for anything but the business of the moment, which was attending to the Squire's guests. Evidently one woman could retain her senses in the presence of this tailor's figure. Dave's admiration of Anna went up several points.

She slipped about as quietly as a spirit, removing and replacing dishes with exquisite deftness. Even the Squire was forced to acknowledge that she was a great acquisition to the household. She neither sought to avoid nor to attract the attention of Sanderson; she waited on him attentively and unobtrusively as she would have waited on any other guest at the Squire's table. The Squire and Sanderson retired to the porch to discuss the purchase of the stock, and Mrs. Bartlett and Anna set to work to clear away the dishes. Kate excused herself from assisting, as she had to assume the position as hostess and soon had the church choir singing in its very best style. Song after song rang out on the clear summer air. It was a treat not likely to be forgotten soon by the listeners. All the members of the choir had what is known as "natural talent," joined to which there was a very fair amount of cultivation, and the result was music of a most pleasing type, music that touches the heart—not a mere display of vocal gymnastics.

Toward the close of the festivities, the sound of wheels was heard, and the cracked voice of

Rube Whipple, the town constable, urging his ancient nag to greater speed, issued out of the darkness. Rube was what is known as a "character." He had held the office, which on account of being associated with him had become a sort of municipal joke, in the earliest recollections of the oldest inhabitants. He apparently got no older. For the past fifty years he had looked as if he had been ready to totter into the grave at any moment, but he took it out apparently, in attending to other people's funerals instead. His voice was cracked, he walked with a limp, and his clothes, Hi Holler said: "was the old suit Noah left in the ark."

The choir had just finished singing "Rock of Ages" as the constable turned his venerable piece of horseflesh into the front yard.

"Well, well," he said, in a voice like a graphophone bady in need of repair, "I might have knowed it was the choir kicking up all that rumpus. Heard the row clear up to the postoffice, and thought I'd come up to see if anyone was getting murdered."

"Thought you'd be on the spot for once, did you,

Rube!" inquired Hi Holler. "Well, seeing you're here, we might accommodate you, by getting up a murder, or a row, or something. 'Twould be too bad to have nothing happen, seeing you are on hand for once."

The choir joined heartily in the laugh on the constable, who waited till it had subsided and then said:

"Well, what's the matter with jailing all of you for disturbing the public peace. There's law for it—'disturbin' the public peace with strange sounds at late and unusual hours of the night.'"

"All right, constable," said Cynthia, "I suppose you'll drive us to jail in that rig o' yourn. I'd be willing to stay there six months for the sake o' driving behind so spry a piece of horseflesh as that."

"'Tain't the horseflesh she's after, constable, it's the driver. Everyone 'round here knows how Cynthia dew admire you."

"Professional jealousy is what's at the bottom of this," declared Kate, "the choir is jealous of Uncle Rube's reputation as a singer, and Uncle Rube does not care for the choir's new-fangled

methods of singing. Rivalry! Rivalry! That's what the matter."

"That's right, Miss Kate," squeaked the constable, "they're jealous of my singing. There ain't one of 'em, with all their scaling, and do-re-mi-ing can touch me. If I turned professional to-day, I'd make more'n all of 'em put together."

"That's cause they'd pay you to quit. Ha, ha," said Hi Holler.

And so the evening passed with the banter that invariably took place when Rube was of the party. It was late when they left the Squire's, the constable going along with them, and all singing merrily as birds on a summer morning.

David went out under the stars and smoked innumerable pipes, but they did not give their customary solace to-night. There was an upheaval going on in his well regulated mind. "Who was she? What was the mystery about her? How did a girl like that come to be tramping about the country looking for work?" Her manner of speaking, the very intonations of her voice, her choice of words, all proclaimed her

from a different world from theirs. He had noticed her hands, white and fragile, and her small delicate wrists. They did not belong to a working woman.

And her eyes, that seemed to hold the sorrows of centuries in their liquid depths. What was the mystery of it all? And that insolent city chap! What a look he had given her. The memory of it made Dave's hands come together as if he were strangling something. But it was all too deep for him. The lights glimmered in the rooms upstairs. His father walked to the outer gate to say good-night to Mr. Sanderson—and he tried to justify the feeling of hatred he felt toward Sanderson, but could not. The sound of a shutter being drawn in, caused him to look up. Anna leaned out in the moonlight for a moment before drawing in the blind. Dave took off his hat—it was an unconscious act of reverence. The next moment, the grave, shy countryman had smiled at his sentimentality. The shutters closed and all was dark, but Dave continued to think and smoke far into the night.

The days slipped by in pleasant and even tenor.

The summer burned itself out in a riot of glorious colors, the harvest was gathered in, and the ripe apples fell from the trees—and there was a wail of coming winter to the night wind. Anna Moore had made her place in the Bartlett family. The Squire could not imagine how he ever got along without her; she always thought of everyone's comfort and remembered their little individual likes and dislikes, till the whole household grew to depend on her.

But she never spoke of herself nor referred to her family, friends or manner of living, before coming to the Bartlett farm.

When she had first come among them, her beauty had caused a little ripple of excitement among the neighbors; the young men, in particular, were all anxious to take her to husking bees and quilting parties, but she always had some excellent excuse for not going, and while her refusals were offered with the utmost kindness, there was a quiet dignity about the girl that made any attempt at rustic playfulness or familiarity impossible.

Sanderson came to the house from time to time,

but Anna treated him precisely as she would have treated any other young man who came to the Squire's. She was the family "help," her duty stopped in announcing the guests—or sometimes, and then she felt that fate had been particularly cruel—in waiting on him at table.

Once or twice when Sanderson had found her alone, he had attempted to speak to her. But she silenced him with a look that sent him away cowering like a whipped cur. If he had any interest in any member of the Squire's family, Anna did not notice it. He was an ugly scar on her memory, and when not actually in his presence she tried to forget that he lived.

CHAPTER XII.

KATE BREWSTER HOLDS SANDERSON'S ATTENTION.

"A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Incapable of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy."

—*Shakespeare.*

It was perhaps owing to the fact that Anna strove hourly to eliminate the memory of Lennox Sanderson from her life, that she remained wholly unaware of that which every member of the Squire's household was beginning to notice: namely, that Lennox Sanderson was becoming daily more attentive to Kate Brewster.

She had more than once hazarded a guess on why a man of Sanderson's tastes should care to remain in so quiet a neighborhood, but could arrive at no solution of the case. In discussing him, she had heard the Bartletts quote his reason, that

he was studying practical farming, and later on intended to take it up, on a large scale. When she had first seen him at the Squire's, she had made up her mind that it would be better for her to go away, but the memory of the homeless wanderings she had endured after her mother's death, filled her with terror, and after the first shock of seeing Sanderson, she concluded that it was better to remain where she was, unless he should attempt to force his society on her, in which case she would have to go, if she died by the wayside.

Dave was coming across the fields late one autumn afternoon when he saw Anna at the well, trying with all her small strength to draw up a bucket of water. The well—one of the old-fashioned kind that worked by a "sweep" and pole, at the end of which hung "the old oaken bucket" which Anna drew up easily till the last few feet and then found it was hard work. She had both hands on the iron bale of the bucket and was panting a little, when a deep, gentle voice said in her ear: "Let go, little woman, that's too heavy for you." And she felt the bucket taken forcibly out of her hand.

"Never mind me, Mr. David," she said, giving way reluctantly.

"Always at some hard work or other," he said; "you won't quit till you get laid up sick."

He filled the water-pail from the bucket for her, which she took up and was about to go when he found courage to say:

"Won't you stay a minute, Anna, I want to talk to you.

"Anna, have you any relatives?"

"Not now."

"But have you no friends who knew you and loved you before you came to us?"

"I want nothing of my friends, Mr. David, but their good will."

"Anna, why will you persist in cutting yourself off from the rest of the world like this? You are too good, too womanly a girl, to lead this colorless kind of an existence forever."

She looked at him pleadingly out of her beautiful eyes. "Mr. David, you would not be intentionally cruel to me, I know, so don't speak to me of these things. It only distresses *me*—and can do you no good."

"Forgive me, Anna, I would not hurt you for the world—but you must know that I love you. Don't you think you could ever grow to care for me?"

"Mr. David, I shall never marry any one. Do not ask me to explain, and I beg of you, if you have a feeling of even ordinary kindness for me, that you will never mention this subject to me again. You remember how I promised your father that if he would let me make my home with you, he should never live to regret it? Do you think that I intend to repay the dearest wish of his heart in this way? Why, Mr. David, you are engaged to marry Kate." She took up the water-pail to go.

"Kate's one of the best girls alive, but I feel toward her like a brother. Besides, Anna, what have you been doing with those big brown eyes of yours? Don't you see that Kate and Lennox Sanderson are head over heels in love with each other?"

The pail of water slipped from Anna's hand and sent a flood over David's boots.

"No, no—anything but that! You don't know what you are saying!"

Dave looked at her in absolute amazement. He had no chance to reply. As if in answer to his remark, there came through the outer gate, Kate and Sanderson arm in arm. They had been gathering golden-rod, and their arms were full of the glory of autumn.

There was a certain assumption of proprietary right in the way that Sanderson assisted Kate with the golden-rod that Anna recognized. She knew it, and falseness of it burned through her like so much corrosive acid. She stood with the upturned pail at her feet, unable to recover her composure, her bosom heaving high, her eyes dilating. She stood there, wild as a startled panther, uncertain whether to fight or fly.

"You don't know what a good time we've been having," Kate called out.

"You see, Anna dear, I was right," David said to her.

But Anna did not answer. Sorrow had broken her on its wheel. Where was the justice of it? Why should he go forth to seek his happiness—

and find it—and she cower in shame through all the years to come?

Dave saw that she had forgotten his presence; she stood there in the gathering night with wild, unseeing eyes. Memory had turned back the hands of the clock till it pointed out that fatal hour on another golden afternoon in autumn, and Sanderson, the hero of the hour, had come to her with the marks of battle still upon him, and as the crowd gave away for him, right and left, he had said: "I could not help winning with your eyes on me."

Oh, the lying dishonor of it! It was not jealousy that prompted her, for a moment, to go to Kate and tell her all. What right had such vultures as he to be received, smiled upon, courted, caressed? If there was justice on earth, his sin should have been branded on him, that other women might take warning.

Dave knew that her thoughts had flown miles wide of him, and his unselfishness told him that it would be kindness to go into the house and leave her to herself, which he did with a heavy heart and many misgivings.

Hi Holler had none of Dave's sensitiveness. He saw Anna standing by the gate, and being a loquacious soul, who saw no advantage in silence, if there was a fellow creature to talk to, he came up grinning: "Say, Anna, I wonder if me and you was both thinkin' about the same thing—I was thinkin' as I seen Sanderson and Kate passin', that I certainly would enjoy a piece o' weddin' cake, don't care whose it was."

"No, Hi," Anna said, being careful to restrain any bitterness of tone, "I certainly was not wishing for a wedding cake."

"I certainly do like wedding cake, Anna, but then, I like everything to eat. Some folks don't like one thing, some folks don't like another. Difference between them an' me is, I like everything."

Anna laughed in spite of herself.

"Yes, since I like everything, and I like it all the time, why, I ain't more than swallowed the last buckwheat for breakfast, than I am ready for dinner. You don't s'pose I'm sick or anything, do you, Anna?"

"I don't think the symptoms sound alarming, Hi."

"Well, you take a load off my mind, Anna, cause I was getting scared about myself." Seeing the empty water-pail, Hi refilled it and carried it in the house for Anna. Dave was not the only one in that household who was miserable, owing to Cupid's unaccountable antics. Professor Sterling, the well-paying summer boarder, continued to remain with the Bartletts, though summer, the happy season during which the rustic may square his grudge with the city man within his gates, had long since passed.

The professor had spared enough time from his bugs and beetles to notice how blue Kate's eyes were, and how luxurious her hair; then he had also, with some misgivings, regarded his own in the mirror, with the unassuring result that his hair was thinning on top and his eyes looked old through his gold-bowed spectacles.

The discovery did not meet with the indifference one might have expected on the part of the conscientious entomologist. He fell even to the depths of reading hair-restoring circulars and he

spent considerable time debating whether he should change his spectacles for a pince-nez.

The spectacles, however, continued to do their work nobly for the professor, not only assisting him to make his scientific observations on the habits of a potato-bug in captivity, but showing him with far more clearness that Kate Brewster and Lennox Sanderson contrived to spend a great deal of time in each other's society, and that both seemed to enjoy the time thus spent.

The professor went back to his beetles, but they palled. The most gorgeous butterfly ever constructed had not one-tenth the charm for him that was contained in a glance of Kate Brewster's eyes, or a glimpse of her golden head as she flitted about the house. And so the autumn waned.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUALITY OF MERCY.

"Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the fault I see;
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me."

—*Pope.*

SANDERSON, during his visits to the Bartlett farm—and they became more frequent as time went on—would look at Anna with cold curiosity, not unmixed with contempt, when by chance they happened to be alone for a moment. But the girl never displayed by so much as the quiver of an eye-lash that she had ever seen him before.

Had Lennox Sanderson been capable of fathoming Anna Moore, or even of reading her present marble look or tone, he would have seen that he had little to apprehend from her beyond con-

tempt, a thing he would not in the least have minded; but he was cunning, and like the cunning shallow. So he began to formulate plans for making things even with Anna—in other words, buying her off.

His admiration for Kate deepened in proportion as the square of that young woman's reserve increased. She was not only the first woman who refused to burn incense at his shrine, but also the first who frankly admitted that she found him amusing. She mildly guyed his accent, his manner of talking, his London clothes, his way of looking at things. Never having lived near a university town, she escaped the traditional hero worship. It was a new sensation for Sanderson, and eventually he succumbed to it.

"You know, Miss Kate," he said one day, "you are positively the most refreshing girl I have ever met. You don't know how much I love you."

Kate considered for a moment. There was a hint of patronage, it seemed to her, in his compliment, that she did not care for."

"Oh, consider the debt cancelled, Mr. Sanderson. You have not found my rustic simplicity

any more refreshing than I have found your poster waistcoats."

"Why do you persist in misunderstanding and hurting me?"

"I apologize to your waistcoats, Mr. Sanderson. I have long considered them the substitute for your better nature."

"Better natures and that sort of thing have rather gone out of style, haven't they?"

"They are always out of style with people who never had them."

"Is this quarreling, Kate, or making love?"

"Oh, let's make it quarreling, Mr. Sanderson. And now about that horse you lent me. That's a vile bit you've got on him." And the conversation turned to other things, as it always did when he tried to be sentimental with Kate. Sometimes he thought it was not the girl, but her resistance, that he admired so much.

Things in the Bartlett household were getting a bit uneasy. The Squire chafed that his cherished project of Kate and Dave's marrying seemed no nearer realization now than it had been two years ago.

Dave's equable temper vanished under the strain and uncertainty regarding Anna Moore's silence and apparent indifference to him. He would have believed her before all the world; her side of the story was the only version for him; but Anna did not see fit to break her silence. When he would approach her on the subject she would only say:

"Mr. David, your father employs me as a servant. I try to do my work faithfully, but my past life concerns no one but myself."

And Dave, fearing that she might leave them, if he continued to force his attentions on her, held his peace. The thought of losing even the sight of her about the house wrung his heart. He could not bear to contemplate the long winter days uncheered by her gentle presence.

It was nearly Thanksgiving. The first snow had come and covered up everything that was bare and unsightly in the landscape with its beautiful mantle of white, and Anna, sitting by the window, dropped the stocking she was darning to press the bitter tears back to her eyes.

The snow had but one thought for her. She

saw it falling, falling soft and feathery on a baby's grave in the Episcopal Cemetery at Somerville. She shivered; it was as if the flakes were falling on her own warm flesh.

If she could but go to that little grave and lie down among the feathery flakes and forget it all, it would be so much easier than this eternal struggle to live. What had life in store for her? There was the daily drudgery, years and years of it, and always the crushing knowledge of injustice.

She knew how it would be. Scandal would track her down—put a price on her head; these people who had given her a home would hear, and what would all her months of faithful service avail?

"Is this true?" she already heard the Squire say in imagination, and she should have to answer: "Yes"—and there would be the open door and the finger pointing to her to go.

She heard the Squire's familiar step on the stair; unconsciously, she crouched lower; had he come to tell her to go?

But the Squire came in whistling, a picture of

homely contentment, hands in pocket, smiling jovially. She knew there must be no telltale tears on her cheeks, even if her heart was crying out in the cold and snow. She knew the bitterness of being denied the comfort of tears. It was but one of the hideous train of horrors that pursued a woman in her position.

She forced them back and met the Squire with a smile that was all the sweeter for the effort.

"Here's your chair, Squire, all ready waiting for you, and the only thing you want to make you perfectly happy—is—guess?" She held out his old corncob pipe, filled to perfection.

"I declare, Anna, you are just spoiling me, and some day you'll be going off and getting married to some of these young fellows 'round here, and where will I be then?"

"You need have no fears on that score," she said, struggling to maintain a smile.

"Well, well, that's what girls always say, but I don't know what we'll do without you. How long have you been with us, now?"

"Let me see," counting on her fingers: "just six months."

"So it is, my dear. Well, I hope it will be six years before you think of leaving us. And, Anna, while we are talking, I like to say to you that I have felt pretty mean more than once about the way I treated you that first day you come."

"Pray, do not mention it, Squire. Your kindness since has quite made me forget that you hesitated to take an utter stranger into your household."

"That was it, my dear—an utter stranger—and you cannot really blame me; here was Looizy and Kate and I was asked to take into the house with them a young woman whom I had never set eyes on before; it seemed to me a trifle risky, but you've proved that I was wrong, my dear, and I'll admit it."

The girl dropped the stocking she was mending; her trembling hand refused to support even the pretense of work. Outside the snow was falling just as it was falling, perhaps, on the little grave where all her youth and hope were buried.

The thought gave her courage to speak, though the pale lips struggled pitifully to frame the words.

"Squire, suppose that when I came to you that day last June you had been right—I am only saying this for the sake of argument, Squire—but suppose that I had been a deceived girl, that I had come here to begin all over again; to live down the injustice, the scandal and all the other things that unfortunate woman have to live down, would you still have felt the same?"

"Why, Anna, I never heard you talk like this before; of course I should have felt the same; if a commandment is broke, it's broke; nothing can alter that, can it?"

"But, Squire, is there no mercy, no chance held out to the woman who has been unfortunate?"

"Anna, these arguments don't sound well from a proper behaving young woman like you. I know it's the fashion nowadays for good women to talk about mercy to their fallen sisters, but it's a mistake. When a woman falls, she loses her right to respect, and that's the end of it."

She turned her face to the storm and the softly falling flakes were no whiter than her face.

As Anna turned to leave the room on some pretext, she saw Kate coming in with a huge

bunch of Jacqueminot roses in her hand. Of course, Sanderson had sent them. The perfume of them sickened Anna, as the odor of a charnel house might have done. She tried to smile bravely at Kate, who smiled back triumphantly as she went in to show her uncle the flowers. But the sight of them was like the turning of a knife in a festering wound.

Anna made her way to the kitchen. Dave was sitting there smoking. Anna found strength and sustenance in his mere presence, though she did not say a word to him, but he was such a faithful soul. Good, honest Dave.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VILLAGE GOSSIP SNIFFS SCANDAL.

"Flavia, most tender of her own good name,
Is rather careless of her sister's fame!
Her superfluity the poor supplies,
But if she touch a character it dies."

—*Cowper.*

It was characteristic of Marthy Perkins and her continual pursuit of pleasure, that she should wade through snowdrifts to Squire Bartlett's and ask for a lift in his sleigh. The Squire's family were going to a surprise party to be given to one of the neighbor's, and Marthy was as determined about going as a debutante.

She came in, covered with snow, hooded, shawled and coated till she resembled a huge cocoon. The Squire placed a big armchair for

her near the fire, and Marthy sat down, but not without disdaining Anna's offers to remove her wraps. She sniffed at Anna—no other word will express it—and savagely clutched her big old-fashioned muff when Anna would have taken it from her to dry it of the snow.

The sleighbells jingled merrily as the different parties drove by, singing, whistling, laughing, on their way to the party. The church choir, snugly installed in "Doc" Wiggin's sleigh, stopped at the Squire's to "thaw out," and try a step or two; Rube Whipple, the town constable, giving them his famous song, "All Bound 'Round with a Woolen String."

Rube was, as usual, the pivot around which the merry-making centered. A few nights before, burglars had broken into the postoffice and carried off the stamps, and the town constable was, as usual, the last one to hear of it. On the night in question, he had spent the evening at the corner grocery store with a couple of his old pals, the stove answering the purpose of a rather large bulls-eye, at which they expectorated, with conscientious regularity, from time to time. Seth

Holcomb, Marthy Perkins faithful swain, had been of the corner grocery party.

"Well, Constable, hear you and Seth helped to keep the stove warm the other night, while thieves walked off with the postoffice," Marthy announced; "what I'd like to know is, how much bitters, rheumatism bitters, you had during the evening?"

"Well, Marthy Perkins, you ought to be the last to throw it up to Seth that he's obliged to spend his evenings round a corner grocery—that's adding insult to injury."

"Insult to injury I reckon can stand, Rube; it's when you add Seth's bitters that it staggers."

But Seth, who never minded Marthy's stings and jibes, only remarked: "The recipy for them bitters was given to me by a blame good doctor."

"That cuts you out, Wiggins," the Squire said playfully.

"No, I don't care about standing father to Seth's bitters," "Doc" Wiggins remarked, "but I've tasted worse stuff on a cold night."

"Oh, Seth ain't pertickler about the tempera-

ture, when he takes a dose of bitters. Hot or cold, it's all the same to him," finished Marthy.

Seth took the opportunity to whisper to her: "You're going to sit next to me in 'Doc' Wiggin's sleigh to-night, ain't you, Marthy?"

"Indeed I ain't," said the spinster, scornfully tossing her head, "my place will have to be filled by the bitters-bottle; I am going with the Squire and Mrs. Bartlett."

"Doc" Wiggin's party left in high good humor, the Squire and his party promising to follow immediately. Anna ran upstairs to get Mrs. Bartlett's bonnet and cloak, and Marthy, with a great air of mystery, got up, and, carefully closing the door after the girl, turned to the Squire and his wife with:

"I've come to tell you something about her."

"Something about Anna?" said the Squire indignantly.

"Oh, no, not about our Anna," protested Mrs. Bartlett: "Why, she is the best kind of a girl; we are all devoted to her."

"That's just the saddest part of it, I says to myself when I heard. How can I ever make up

my mind to tell them pore, dear Bartletts, who took her in, and has been treating her like one of their own family ever since? It will come hard on them, I sez, but that ought not to deter me from my duty."

"Look here, Marthy," thundered the Squire, "if you've got anything to say about that girl, out with it——"

"Well, land sake—you needn't be so touchy; she ain't kin to you, and you might thank your lucky stars she ain't."

"Well, what is it, Marthy?" interposed Mrs. Bartlett. "Anna'll be down in a minute."

"Well, you know, I have been sewin' down to Warren Center this last week, and Maria Thomson, from Belden, was visiting there, and naturally we all got to talking 'bout folks up this way, and that girl Anna Moore's name was mentioned, and I'm blest if Maria Thomson didn't recognize her from my description.

"I was telling them 'bout the way she came here last June, pale as a ghost, and how she said her mother had just died and she'd been sick, and they knew right off who she was."

Marthy loved few things as she did an interested audience. It was her meat and drink.

"Well, she didn't call herself Moore in Belden, though that was her mother's name—she called herself Lennox," Marthy grinned. "She was one of those married ladies who forgot their wedding rings."

The Squire knit his brows and his jaws came together with a snap; there were tears in Mrs. Bartlett's eyes. The gossip looked from one to the other to see the impression her words were making.

It spurred her on to new efforts. She positively rolled the words about in delight before she could utter them.

"Well, the girl's mother, who had been looking worried out of her skin, took sick and died all of a sudden, and the girl took sick herself very soon afterwards—and what do you think? A girl baby was born to Mrs. Lennox, but her husband never came near her. Fortunately, the baby did not live to embarrass her. It died, and she packed up and left Belden. That's when she came here.

"And now," continued the village inquisitor,

summing up her terrible evidence, "what are we to think of a girl called Miss Moore in one town and Mrs. Lennox in the other, with no sign of a wedding ring and no sign of a husband? And what are we going to think of that baby? It seems to me scandalous." And she leaned back in her chair and rocked furiously.

The Squire brought his hand down on the table with terrible force, his pleasant face was distorted with rage and indignation.

"Just what I always said would come of taking in strange creatures that we knew nothing about. Do you think that I will have a creature like that in my house with my wife and my niece, polluting them with her very presence?—out she goes this minute!"

He strode over to the door through which Anna had passed a few moments before, he flung it open and was about to call when he felt his wife cling frantically to his arm.

"Father, don't do anything in anger that you'll repent of later. How do you know this is true? Look how well the girl has acted since she has

been here"—and in a lower voice, "you know that Marthy's given to talking."

The hand on the knob relaxed, a kindly light replaced the anger in his eyes.

"You are right, Looizy, what we've heard is only hearsay. I'll not say a word to the girl till I know; but to-morrow I am going to Belden and find out the whole story from beginning to end."

Kate and the professor came in laden with wraps, laughing and talking in great glee. Kate was going to ride in the sleigh with the professor, and the discovery of a new species of potato-bug could not have delighted him more. He was in a most gallant mood, and concluding that this was the opportunity for making himself agreeable, he undertook to put on Kate's rubbers over her dainty dancing slippers.

Perhaps it was a glimpse of the cobwebby black silk stocking that ensnared his wits, perhaps it was the delight of kneeling to Kate even in this humble capacity. In either case, the result was equally grotesque; Kate found her dainty feet neatly enclosed in the professor's ungainly arc-

tics, while he hopelessly contemplated her overshoe and the size of his own foot.

Anna returned with Mrs. Bartlett's bonnet and cloak before the laugh at the professor had subsided. She adjusted the cloak, tied Mrs. Bartlett's bonnet strings with daughterly care and then turned to look after the Squire's comfort, but he strode past her to the sleigh with Marthy. Kate and the professor called on a cheery "Good-night," but Mrs. Bartlett remained long enough to take the pretty, sorrowful face in her hands and give it a sweet, motherly kiss.

When the jingling of the sleighbells died away across the snow, Hi offered to read jokes to Anna from "Pickings from Puck," which he had selected as a Christmas present from Kate, if she would consent to have supper in the sitting-room, where it was warm and cosy. Anna began to pop the corn, and Hi to read the jokes with more effort than he would have expended on the sawing of a cord of wood.

He bit into an apple. An expression of perfect contentment illuminated his countenance and in a voice husky with fruit began: "Oh, here is a love-

ly one, Anna," and he declaimed, after the style usually employed by students of the first reader.

"Weary Raggles: 'Say, Ragsy, w'y don't you ask 'em for something to eat in dat house. Is you afraid of de dog?' "

"Ragsy Reagan: 'No, I a-i-n-t 'fraid of the dog, but me pants is frayed of him.' "

"Ha, ha, ha—say, Anna, that's the funniest thing I ever did see. The tramp wasn't frayed of him, but his pants was 'fraid of him. Gee, ain't that a funny joke? And say, Anna, there's a picture with his clothes all torn."

Hi was fairly convulsed; he read till the tears rolled down his cheeks. " 'Pickin's from Puck, the funniest book ever wrote.' Here's another, Anna."

" 'A p-o-o-r old man was sunstruck on Broadway this morning. His son struck him for five dollars.' " Hi sat pondering over it for a full minute, then he burst into a loud guffaw that continued so long and uproariously that neither heard the continued rapping on the front door.

"Hi, some one is knocking on the front door. Do go and see who it is."

"O! let 'em knock, Anna, don't let's break up our party for strangers."

"Well, Hi, I'll have to go myself," and she laid down the corn-popper, but the boy got up grumbling, lurched to the door and let in Lennox Sanderson.

"'Tain't nobody at home, Mr. Sanderson," said Hi, inhospitably blocking the way. Anna had crouched over the fire, as if to obliterate herself.

"Here, Hi, you take this and go out and hold my horse; he's mettlesome as the deuce this cold weather. I want to get warm before I go to Putnam's."

Hi put on his muffler, mits and cap—each with a favorite "swear word," such as "ding it," "dum it," "darn it." Nevertheless he wisely concluded to take the half dollar from him and save it for the spring crop of circuses.

Anna started to leave the room, but Sanderson's peremptory "Stay here, I've got to talk to you," detained her.

They looked into each other's faces—these two, who but a few short months ago had been all in

all to each other—and the dead fire was not colder than their looks.

"Well, Anna," he said sneeringly, "what's your game? You've been hanging about here ever since I came to the neighborhood. How much do you want to go away?"

"Nothing that you could give me, Lennox Sanderson. My only wish is that I might be spared the sight of you."

"Don't beat around the bush, Anna; is it money, or what? You are not foolish enough to try to compel me to marry you?"

"Nothing could be further from my mind. I did think once of compelling you to right the wrong you have done me, but that is past. It is buried in the grave with my child."

"Then the child is dead?" He came over to the fireplace where she stood, but she drew away from him.

"You have nothing to fear from me, Lenox Sanderson. The love I felt once is dead, and I have no feeling for you now but contempt."

"You need not rub it in like that, Anna. I was perfectly willing to do the square thing by

you always, but you flared up, went away, and Heaven only knew what became of you. It's bad enough to have things made unpleasant for me in Boston on your account, without having you queering my plans here."

"Boston—I never told anyone in Boston."

"No, but that row got into the papers about Langdon and the Tremonts cut me."

"Hush," said Anna, as a spasm of pain crossed her face: "I never wish you to refer to my past life again."

"Indeed, Anna, I am only too anxious to do the right thing by you, even now. If you will go away, I will give you what you want, if you don't intend to interfere between Kate and me."

"Are you sure that Kate is in earnest? You know that the Squire intends her to marry Dave."

"I shall have no difficulty in preventing that if you don't interfere."

She did not answer. She was again considering the same old question that she had thrashed out a thousand times—should she tell Kate? How would she take it? Would the tragedy of

her life be regarded as a little wild-oat sowing on the part of Sanderson and her own eternal disgrace?

The man was in no humor for her silence. He grasped her roughly by the arm, and his voice was raised loud in angry protest. "Tell me—do you, or do you not intend to interfere?"

In the excitement of the moment neither heard the outer door open, and neither heard David enter. He stood in his quiet way, looking from one to the other. Sanderson's angry question died away in some foolish commonplace, but David had heard and Anna and Sanderson knew it.

CHAPTER XV.

DAVID CONFESSES HIS LOVE.

"Come live with me and be my love;
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
Woods, or steep mountains, yield."

—*Marlowe.*

SANDERSON, recovering his self-possession almost immediately, drawled out:

"Glad to see you, Dave. Came over thinking I might be in time to go over to Putnam's with your people. They had gone, so I stopped long enough to get warm. I must be going now. Good-night, Miss—Miss"—(he seemed to have great difficulty in recalling the name) "Moore."

David paid no attention to him; his eyes were riveted on Anna, who had changed color and was

now like ivory flushing into life. She trembled and fell to her knees, making a pretense of gathering up her knitting that had fallen.

"What brought Sanderson here, Anna? Is he anything to you—are you anything to him?"

She tried to assume a playful lightness, but it failed dismally. It was all her pallid lips could do to frame the words: "Why, Mr. David, what a curious question! What possible interest could the 'catch' of the neighborhood have in your father's servant?"

The suggestion of flippancy that her words contained irritated the grave, quiet man as few things could have done. He turned from her and would have left the room, but she detained him.

"I am sorry I wounded you, Mr. David, but, indeed, you have no right to ask."

"I know it, Anna, and you won't give me the right; but how dared that cub Sanderson speak to you in that way?" He caught her hand, and unconsciously wrung it till she cried out in pain. "Forgive me, dear, I would not hurt you for the world; but that man's manner toward you makes me wild."

She looked up at him from beneath her long, dark lashes; he thought her eyes were like the glow of forest fires burning through brushwood. "We will never think of him again, Mr. David. I assure you that I am no more to Mr. Sanderson than he is to me, and that is—nothing."

"Thank you for those words, Anna. I cannot tell you how happy they make me. But I do not understand you at all. Even a countryman like me can see that you have never been used to our rough way of living; you were never born to this kind of thing, and yet when that man Sanderson looks at you or talks to you, there is always an undertone of contempt in his look, his words."

She sank wearily into an armchair. It seemed to her that her limit of endurance had been reached, but he, taking her silence for acquiescence, lost no time in following up what he fondly hoped might be an advantage. "I did not go to the Putnams to-night, Anna, because you were not going, and there is no enjoyment for me when you are not there."

"Mr. David, if you continue to talk to me like this I shall have to leave this house."

"Tell me, Anna," he said so gravely that the woman beside him knew that life and death were balanced with her words: "tell me, when you said that day last autumn by the well that you never intended to marry, was it just a girl's coquetry or was there some deeper reason for your saying so?"

She could not face the love in those honest eyes and answer as her conscience prompted. She was tired, so tired of the struggle, what would she not have given to rest here in the shelter of this perfect love and trust, but it was not for her.

"Mr. David," she said, looking straight before her with wide, unseeing eyes; "I can be no man's wife."

He knew from the lines of suffering written deep on the pale young face, that maiden coquetry had not inspired her to speak thus; but word for word, it had been wrung from out of the depths of a troubled soul.

"Anna!" cried David, in mingled astonishment and pain. But Anna only turned mutely toward

him with an imploring look. She stretched out her hands to him, as if trying to tell him more. But words failed her. Her tears overcame her and she fled, sobbing, to her room. All the way up the winding flight of stairs, David could hear her anguished moans. He would have followed her, but Hi burst into the room, stamping the snow from his boots. He shoved in the front door as if he had been an invading army. He unwound his muffler and cast it from him as if he had a grudge against it, as he proceeded to deliver himself of his wrongs.

"If there's any more visitors coming to the house to-night that wants their horses held, they can do it themselves, for I am going to have my supper." David made no reply, but went to his own room to brood over the day's events. And so Anna was spared any further talk with David that night; a circumstance for which she was devoutly thankful.

The next day the snow was deeper by a foot, but this did not deter the Squire from making his proposed trip to Belden. He started imme

diately after breakfast, prepared to sift matters to the bottom.

An air of tension and anxiety pervaded the household all that long, miserable day. Anna was tortured with doubts. Should she slip away quietly without telling, or should she make her humiliating confession to Kate? Mrs. Bartlett, who knew the object of her husband's errand, could not control her nerves. She knew intuitively "that something was going to happen," as the good soul put it to herself.

Altogether it was one of those nerve-wracking days that come from time to time in the best regulated households, apparently for no other purpose but to prove the fact that a solitary existence is not necessarily the most unhappy.

Mrs. Bartlett, for the first time in her life, was worried about Dave. He was moody and morose, even to her, his sworn friend and ally, with whom he had never had a word's difference. He had gone off that morning shortly after the Squire left the house; and his mother, watching him carefully at breakfast, noticed that he had shoved away his plate with the food untasted.

A fatal symptom to the ever-watchful maternal eye.

Kate felt sulky because her aunt and uncle had been urging her to marry Dave, and apparently Dave had no affection for her beyond that of a cousin, the situation irritating her in the extreme.

"Aunt Louisa, what is the matter with every one?" she said, flouncing into the kitchen. "Something seems to have jarred the family nerves. Here is uncle off on some mysterious business, Dave goes off in the snow in a tantrum, and you look as if you had just buried your last friend." And the young lady left the room as suddenly as she entered it.

"It does feel as if trouble was brewing," Mrs. Bartlett admitted to Anna, with a gloomy shake of the head. "I'm getting that worried about Dave, he's been away all day, and it's not usual for him to stay away like this." Her voice broke a little, and she left the room hurriedly.

He came in almost immediately, stamping the snow from his boots and looking twice as savage as when he went away.

"Mrs. Bartlett had been worrying about you all day, Mr. David," Anna said as she turned from the dresser with her arms full of plates.

"And did you care, Anna, that I was not here?" He gave her the appealing glance of a great mastiff who hopes for a friendly pat on the head.

"My feelings on the subject can be of no interest to you," she answered with chilling decision.

"All right," and he went to the hat-rack to get his muffler and cap, preparatory to again facing the storm.

The snow had been falling steadily all day. Drifting almost to the height of the kitchen window, it whirled about the house and beat against the window panes with a muffled sound that was inexpressibly dreary to the girl, who felt herself the center of all this pitiful human contention.

"David, David; where have you been all day, and where are you going now?" His mother looked at his gray, haggard face and tried to guess his hidden trouble, the first he had ever kept from her.

"Mother, I am not a child, and you can't expect me to hang about the stove like a cat, all my

life." It was his first harsh word to her and she shrank before it as if it had been a blow. David, her boy, to speak to her like that! She turned quickly away to hide the tears, the first she had ever shed on his account.

"Here, Anna," she said, struggling to recover her composure, "take this bucket and get it filled for me, please."

The girl reached for her cloak that hung on a peg near the door.

"No, Anna, you shall not go out for water a night like this; it's not the work for you to do." David had sprung forward and caught the bucket from her hand and plunged with it into the storm. Kate's quick eyes caught the expression of David's face—while Mrs. Bartlett only heard his words. She gave Anna a searching look as she said: "So it is you whom David loves." At last Kate understood the secret of Anna's distracted face—and at last the mother understood the secret of her boy's moodiness—he loved Anna. And her heart was filled with bitterness and anger at the very thought; she had taken her boy, this stranger, with whom the tongue of scandal

was busy. The kindly, gentle, old face lost all its sweetness; jealous anger filled it with ugly lines. Turning to Anna she said:

"It would have been better for all of us if we had not taken you in that day to break up our home with your mischief."

Anna was cut to the quick. "Oh, Mrs. Bartlett, please do not say that; I will go away as soon as you like, but it is not with my consent that David has these foolish fancies about me."

"And do you mean to say that you have never encouraged him," indignantly demanded the irate mother, who with true feminine inconsistency would not have her boy's affections go begging, even while she scorned the object of it.

"Encouraged him? I have begged, entreated him to let me alone; I do not want his love."

An angry sparrow defending her brood could not have been more indignantly demonstrative than this gentle old lady.

"And isn't he good enough for you, Miss?" she asked in a voice that shook with wrath.

"Dear Mrs. Bartlett, would you have me take his love and return it?"

"No, no; that would never do!" and the inconsistent old soul rocked herself to and fro in an agony of despair.

Anna did not resent Mrs. Bartlett's indignation, unjust though it was; she knew how blind good mothers could be when the happiness of their children is at stake. She felt only pity for her and remembered only her kindness. So slipping down on her knees beside the old lady's chair, she took the toil-worn old hands in her own and said:

"Do not think hardly of me, Mrs. Bartlett. You have been so good—and when I am gone, I want you to think of me with affection. I will go away, and all this trouble will straighten itself out, and you will forget that I ever caused you a moment's pain."

Dave came in with the bucket of water that had caused the little squall and prevented his mother from replying, but the hard lines had relaxed in the good old face. She was again "mother" whom they all knew and loved. Sanderson followed close after David; he had just come from Boston, he said, and inquired for Kate

with a simple directness that left no doubt as to whom he had come to see.

It is an indisputable law of the eternal feminine for all women to flaunt a conquest in the face of the man who had declined their affection. Kate was not in love with her cousin David, but she was devoutly thankful to Providence that there was a Lennox Sanderson to flaunt before him in the capacity of tame cat, and prove that he "was not the only man in the world," as she put it to herself.

Therefore when Lennox Sanderson handed her a magnificent bunch of Jacqueminot roses that he had brought her from Boston, Kate was not at all backward in rewarding Sanderson with her graciousness.

"How beautiful they are, Mr. Sanderson; it was so good of you."

"You make me very happy by taking them," he answered with a wealth of meaning.

Anna, who had gone to the storeroom for some apples, after her reconciliation with Mrs. Bartlett, returned to find Sanderson talking earnestly to Kate by the window. Kate held up the roses

for Anna to smell. "Aren't they lovely, Anna? There is nothing like roses for taking the edge off a snowstorm."

Anna was forced to go through the farce of admiring them, while Sanderson looked on with nicely concealed amusement.

"Well, what do you think of them, Anna?" said Kate, disappointed that she made no comment.

"The best thing about roses, speaking generally, Miss Kate, is that they fade quickly and do not embarrass one by outliving the little affairs in which they have played a part." She returned Sanderson's languid glance in a way that made him quail.

"That is quite true," said Kate, being in the humor for a little cynicism. "What a pity that love letters can't be constructed on the same principle."

Sanderson did not feel particularly at ease while these two young women served and returned cynicism; he was accordingly much relieved when Mrs. Bartlett and Anna both left the

room, intent on the solemn ceremony of opening a new supply of preserved peaches.

"Kate, did you mean what you just said to that girl?" Sanderson asked when they were alone.

"What did I say? Oh, yes, about the love letters. Well, what difference does it make whether I meant it or not?"

"It makes all the difference in the world to me, Kate." He read refusal in the big blue eyes, and he made haste to plead his cause before she could say anything.

"Don't answer yet, Kate; don't give me my life-sentence," he said playfully, taking her hand. "Think it over; take as long as you like. Hope with you is better than certainty with any other woman."

Professor Sterling, who had been to a neighboring town on business for the past two or three days, walked into the middle of this little tableau in time to hear the last sentence. Kate and Sanderson had failed to hear him, partly because he had neglected to remove his overshoes and partly

because they were deeply engrossed with each other.

Though his rival's declaration, which he had every reason to suppose would be accepted, was the death blow to his hopes, yet he unselfishly stepped out into the snow, waited five minutes by his watch—a liberal allowance for an acceptance, he considered—and then rapped loud and theatrically before entering a second time. Could unselfishness go further?

Kate and Sanderson had no other opportunity for confidential talk that evening.

They were barely seated about the supper table, when there came a tremendous rapping at the door, and Marthy Perkins came in, half frozen. For once her voluble tongue was silenced. She retailed no gossip while submitting to the friendly ministrations of Mrs. Bartlett and Anna, who chafed her hands, gave her hot tea and thawed her back to life—and gossip.

"Is the Squire back yet?" asked Marthy with returning warmth. "Land sakes, what can be keeping him? Heard him say last night that he

intended going away this morning, and thought he might have come back."

"With news?" naively asked Sanderson.

"Why, yes. I did think it was likely that he might have gathered up something interesting, away a whole day." Every one laughed but Mrs. Bartlett. She alone knew the object of her husband's quest.

"Your father's not likely to be back to-night—do you think so, Dave?" she asked her son, more by way of drawing him out than in the hope of getting any real information.

"No, I do not think it is likely, mother," he answered.

"Good land! and I nearly froze to death getting here!" Marthy said in an aside to Mrs. Bartlett. "I tell you, Looizy, there is nothing like suspense for wearing you out. I couldn't get a lick of sewing done to-day, waiting for Amasy to get in with the news."

"Hallo! hallo! Let us in quick—here we are, me and the Squire—most froze! Hallo, hallo"—The rest of Hi's remarks were a series of whoops

Every one rose from the table, Mrs. Bartlett pale with apprehension. Marthy flushed with delight. She was not to be balked of her prey. The Squire was here with the news.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALONE IN THE SNOW.

"The cold winds swept the mountain-height,
And pathless was the dreary wild,
And mid the cheerless hours of night
A mother wandered with her child:
As through the drifting snows she press'd,
The babe was sleeping on her breast."

—*Seba Smith.*

The head of the house was home from his mysterious errand, the real object of which was unknown to all but Marthy and his wife.

Kate unwound his muffler and took his cap; his wife assured him that she had been worried to death about him all day; the men inquired solicitously about his journey—how had he stood the cold—and Anna made ready his place at the table. But neither this domestic adulation nor

the atmosphere of warmth and affection awaiting him at his own fireside served for a moment to turn him from the wanton brutality that he was pleased to dignify by the name of duty.

Anna could not help feeling the "snub," and David, whose eyes always followed Anna, saw it before the others. "Father," said he, "what's the matter, you don't speak to Anna."

"I don't want to speak to her. I don't want to look at her. I don't want anything to do with her," replied the Squire. Every one except Martha and Mrs. Bartlett was startled by this blunt, almost brutal outburst.

"I am glad you are all here, the more the better; Marthy, Professor, Mr. Sanderson, glad to see you and all the home folks"—he had a word, a nod, a pat on the back for every one but Anna, and though she sought more than one opportunity to speak to him, he deliberately avoided her.

His wife, who knew all the varying weathers of his temper, was using all her small stock of diplomacy to get him to eat his supper. "When in doubt about a man, feed him," had been Louisa Bartlett's unfailing rule for the last thirty years.

"Here, Amasy, sit down in your place that Anna has fixed for you. You can talk after you've had your tea. Anna, please make the Squire some fresh tea. I'm afraid this is a little cool."

"She need not make my tea, now, or on any future occasion—her days of service in my family are done for." And he hammered the table with his clenched fist.

Anna closed her eyes; it had come at last; she had always known that it was only a question of time.

The rest looked at the Squire dumbfounded. Ah, that is, but Marthy. She was licking her lips in delightful anticipation—with much the same expression as a cat would regard an uncaged canary.

"Why, father, what do you mean?" asked David in amazement. He had heard no rumor of why his father had gone to Belden.

"Now, listen, all of you," and again he thundered on the table with his fist. "Last summer I was persuaded, against my will, to take a strange woman into my house. I found out to-day that

my judgment then was right. I have been imposed on—she is an imposter, an adventuress."

"Amasy, Amasy, don't be so hard on her," pleaded his wife. But the Squire had the true huntsman's instinct—when he went out to hunt, he went out to kill.

"The time has come," he continued, raising his voice and ignoring his wife's pleading, "when this home is better without her."

Anna had already begun her preparation to go. She took her cloak down from its peg and wrapped it about her without a word.

"Father, if Anna goes, I go with her," and David rose to his feet, the very incarnation of wrath, and strode over to where Anna stood apart from the rest. He put his arm about her protectingly, and stood there defiant of them all.

"David, you must be mad. What, you, a son of mine, defy your father here in the presence of your friends for that—adventuress?"

"Father, take back that word about Anna. A better woman never lived. You—who call yourself a Christian—would you send away a friendless girl a night like this? And for what reason?

Because a few old cats have been gossiping about her. It is unworthy of you, father; I would not have believed it."

"So you have appointed yourself her champion, sir. No doubt she has been trying her arts on you. Don't be a fool, David; stand aside, if she wants to go, let her; women like her can look out for themselves; let her go."

"Don't make me forget, sir, that you are my father. I refuse absolutely to hear the woman I love spoken of in this way."

The rest looked on in painful silence; they seemed to be deprived of the power of speech or action by the Squire's vehemence; the wind howled about the house fitfully, and was still, then resumed its wailing grief.

"And you stand there and defy me for that woman in the presence of Kate, to whom you are as good as betrothed?"

"No, no; there is no question of an engagement between David and me, and there never can be," said Kate, not knowing in the least what to make of the turn that things had taken.

David continued to stand with his arm about

"THERE IS THE MAN WHO BETRAYED ME."—Page 170.

Anna. He had heard the Belden gossip—a wealthy young man from Boston had been attentive to her, then left the place; jilted her, some said; been refused by her, said others. It did not make a bit of difference to David which version was true; he was ready to stand by Anna in the face of a thousand gossips. This was just his father's brutal way of upholding what he was pleased to term his authority.

"What do you know about her, David?" reiterated the Squire. "I heard reports, but like you, I would not believe them till I had investigated them fully. Ask her if she has not been the mother of an illegitimate child, who is now buried in the Episcopal cemetery at Belden—ask her if she was not known there under the name of Mrs. Lennox?"

"It is true," said the girl, raising her head, "that I was known as Mrs. Lennox. It is true that I have a child buried in Belden——"

David's arm fell from her, he buried his face in his hands and groaned. Anna opened the door, a whirling gust flared the lamps and drove a skurrying cloud of snowflakes within, yet not

one hand was raised to detain her. She swayed uncertain for a moment on the threshold, then turned to them: "You have hunted me down, you have found out that I have been a mother, that I am without the protection of a husband's name, and that was enough for you—your duty stopped at the scandal. Why did you not find out that I was a young, inexperienced girl who was betrayed by a mock marriage—that I thought myself an honorable wife—why should your duty stop in hunting down a defenseless girl while the man who ruined her life sits there, a welcome guest in your house to-night?"

She was gone—David, who had been stunned by his father's words, ran after her, but the whirling flakes had hidden every trace of her, and the howling wind drove back his cry of "Anna, Anna! come back!"

Anna did not feel the cold after closing the door between her and the Squire's family; the white flame of her wrath seemed to burn up the blood in her veins, as she plunged through the snowdrifts, unconscious of the cold and storm. She had no words in which to formulate her fury

at the indignity of her treatment. Her native sweetness, for the moment, had been extinguished and she was but the incarnation of wronged womanhood, crying aloud to high Heaven for justice.

The blood throbbed at her brain and the quickened circulation warmed her till she loosened the cloak at her throat and wondered, in a dazed sort of way, why she had put it on on such a stifling night. Then she remembered the snow and eagerly uplifted her flushed cheeks that the falling flakes might cool them.

But of the icy grip of the storm she was wholly unconscious. There was a mad exhilaration in facing the wild elements on such a night, the exertion of forcing through the storm chimed in with her mood; each snowdrift through which she fought her way was so much cruel injustice beaten down. She felt that she had the strength and courage to walk to the end of the earth and she went on and on, never thinking of the storm, or her destination, or where she would rest that night. Her head felt light, as if she had been drinking wine, and more than once she stopped

to mop the perspiration from her forehead. How absurd for the snow to fall on such a sultry night, and foolish of those people who had turned her out to die, thinking it was cold—the thermometer must be 100. She paused to get her breath; a blast of icy wind caught her cape, and almost succeeded in robbing her of it, and the chill wrestled with the fever that was consuming her, and she realized for the first time that it was cold.

"Well, what next?" she asked herself, throwing back her head and unconsciously assuming the attitude of a creature brought to bay but still unconquered.

"What next?" She repeated it with the dull despair of one who has nothing further to fear in the way of suffering. The Fates had spent themselves on her, she no longer had the power to respond. Suppose she should become lost in a snowdrift? "Well, what did it matter?"

Then came one of those unaccountable clearings of the mental vision that nature seems to reserve for the final chapter. Her quickened brain grasped the tragedy of her life as it never had before. She saw it with impersonal eyes.

Anna Moore was a stranger on whose case she could sit with unbiased judgment. Her mind swung back to the football game in the golden autumn eighteen months ago, and she heard the cheers and saw the swarms of eager, upturned faces and the dots of blue and crimson, like flowers, in a great waving field. What a panorama of life, and force, and struggle it had been! How typical of life, and the end—but no, the end was not yet; there must be some justice in life, some law of compensation. God must hear at last!

The wind came tearing down from the pine forest, surging through the hills till it became a roar. Ah, it had sounded like that at the game. They had called "Rah, Rah Sanderson" till they were hoarse, "Sanderson, Rah! Sander-son-! Rah! Rah!" The crackling forest seemed to have gone mad with the echo of his name. It had become the keynote of the wind. Rah! Rah! Sanderson!

"You can't escape him even in death" something seemed to whisper in her ear. "Ha-ha, Sanderson, San-der-son." She put her hands to her ears to shut out the hateful sound, but she

heard it, like the wail of a lost soul; this time faint and far off: Sander-son—San-der-son. It was above her in the groaning, creaking branches of the trees, in the falling snow, in the whipping wind, the mockery would not be stilled.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, howled the wind, then sinking to a sigh, San-der-son—San-der-son.

The cold had begun to strike into the marrow. She moved as if her limbs were weighted. There was a mist gathering before her eyes, and she put up her hand and tried to brush it away, but it remained. She felt as if she were carrying something heavy in her arms and as she walked it grew heavier and heavier. To her wandering mind it took a pitifully familiar shape. Ah, yes! She knew what it was now; it was the baby, and she must not let it get cold. She must cover it with her cape and press it close to her bosom to keep it warm, but it was so far, so far, and it was getting heavier every moment.

And the wind continued to wail its dirge of "San-der-son, San-der-son." She went through the motion of covering up the baby's head; she did not want it to waken and hear that awful cry.

She lifted up her empty arms and lowered her head to soothe the imaginary baby with a kiss, and was shocked to feel how cold its little cheek had grown. She hurried on and on. She would beg the Squire to let his wife take it in for just a minute, to warm it. She would not ask to come in herself, but the baby—no one would be so cruel as to refuse her that. It would die out here in the cold and the storm. It was so cruel, so hard to be wandering about on a night like this with the baby. Her eyes began to fill with tears, and her lower lip to quiver, but she plodded on, sometimes gaining a few steps and then retracing them, but always with the same instinct that had spurred her on to efforts beyond her strength, and this done, she had no further concern for herself. Her body especially, where the cape did not protect it against the blast, was freezing, shivering, aching all over. A latent consciousness began to dawn as the dread presence of death drew nearer; some intuitive effort of preservation asserted itself, and she kept repeating over and over: "I must not give up. I must not give up."

Presently the scene began to change, and the

white formless world about her began to assume definite shape. She had seen it all before, the bare trees pointing their naked branches upward, the fringe of willows, the smooth, glassy sheet of water that was partly frozen and partly undulating toward the southern shore. The familiarity of it all began to haunt her. Had she dreamed it —was she dreaming now? Perhaps it was only a dream after all! Then, as if in a wave of clear thought, she remembered it all. It was the lake, and she had been there with the Sunday school children last summer on their picnic.

It came to her like a solution of all her troubles; it was so placid, so still, so cold. A moment and all would be forgotten. She stood with one foot on the creaking ice. It was but to walk a dozen steps to the place where the ice was but a crash of crystal and that would end it all. She was so weary of the eternal strife of things, she was so glad to lay down the burden under which her back was bending to the point of breaking.

And yet, there was the primitive instinct of self-preservation combating her inclination, urging her on to make one more final effort. Back

SHE OPENED HER EYES—SHE WAS NOT DEAD. Page 199

and forth, through the snow about the lake she wandered, without being able to decide. Her strength was fast ebbing. Which—which should it be? "God have mercy!" she cried, and fell unconscious.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NIGHT IN THE SNOWSTORM.

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven."

—*Emerson.*

ALL through that long, wild night David searched and shouted, to find only snow and silence.

Through the darkness and the falling flakes he could not see more than a foot ahead, and when he would stumble over a stone or the fallen trunk of a tree, he would stoop down and search through the drifts with his bare hands, thinking perhaps that she might have fallen, and not finding her, he would again take up his fruitless search, while cold fear gnawed at his heart.

At home in the warm farm house, sat the Squire who had done his duty. The consciousness of having done it, however, did not fill him with that cheerful glow of righteousness that is the reward of a good conscience—on the contrary, he felt small. It might have been imagination, but he felt, somehow, as if his wife and Kate were shunning him. Once he had tried to take his wife's hand as she stood with her face pressed to the window trying to see if she could make out the dim outline of David returning with Anna, but she withdrew her hand impatiently as she had never done in the thirty years of their married life. Amasy's hardness was a thing no longer to be condoned.

Furthermore, when the clock had struck eleven and then twelve, and yet no sign of David or Anna, the Squire had reached for his fur cap and announced his intention of "going to look for 'em." But like the proverbial worm, the wife of his bosom had turned, and with all the determination of a white rabbit she announced:

"If I was you, Amasy, I'd stay to hum; seems as if you had made almost enough trouble for

one day." With the old habit of authority, strong as ever, he looked at the worm, but there was a light in its eyes that warned him as a danger signal.

They were alone together, the Squire and his wife, and each was alone in sorrow, the yoke of severity she had bowed beneath for thirty years uncomplainingly galled to-night. It had sent her boy out into the storm—perhaps to his death. There was little love in her heart for Amasy.

He tried to think that he had only done his duty, that David and Anna would come back, and that, in the meantime, Louisa was less a comfort to him, in his trouble, than she had ever been before. It was, of course, his trouble; it never occurred to him that Louisa's heart might have been breaking on its own account.

The Squire found that duty was a cold comforter as the wretched hours wore on.

Sanderson had slunk from the house without a word immediately after Anna's departure. In the general upheaval no one missed him, and when they did it was too late for them to enjoy

THE FIGHT AT THE OLD SUGAR SHED.—Page 182.

the comfort of shifting the blame to his guilty shoulders.

The professor followed Kate with the mute sympathy of a faithful dog; he did not dare attempt to comfort her. The sight of a woman in tears unnerved him; he would not have dared to intrude on her grief; he could only wait patiently for some circumstance to arise in which he could be of assistance. In the meantime he did the only practical thing within his power—he went about from time to time, poked the fires and put on coal.

Marthy would have liked to discuss the iniquity of Lennox Sanderson with any one—it was a subject on which she could have spent hours—but no one seemed inclined to divert Marthy conversationally. In fact, her popularity was not greater that night in the household than that of the Squire. She spent her time in running from room to room, exclaiming hysterically:

"Land sakes! Ain't it dreadful?"

The tension grew as time wore on without developments of any kind, the waiting with the

haunting fear of the worst grew harder to bear than absolute calamity.

Toward five o'clock the Squire announced his intention of going out and continuing the search, and this time no one objected. In fact, Mrs. Bartlett, Kate and the professor insisted on accompanying him and Marthy decided to go, too, not only that she might be able to say she was on hand in case of interesting developments, but because she was afraid to be left in the house alone.

Toward morning, David, spent and haggard, wandered into a little maple-sugar shed that belonged to one of the neighbors. Smoke was coming out of the chimney, and David entered, hoping that Anna might have found here a refuge.

He was quickly undeceived, however, for Lennox Sanderson stood by the hearth warming his hands. The men glared at each other with the instinctive fierceness of panthers. Not a word was spoken; each knew that the language of

fists could be the only medium of communication between them; and each was anxious to have his say out.

The men faced each other in silence, the flickering glare of the firelight painting grotesque expressions on their set faces. David's greater bulk loomed unnaturally large in the uncertain light, while every trained muscle of Sanderson's athletic body was on the alert.

It was the world old struggle between patrician and proletarian.

Sanderson was an all-round athlete and a boxer of no mean order. This was not his first battle. His quick eye showed him from David's awkward attitude, that his opponent was in no way his equal from a scientific standpoint. He looked for the easy victory that science, nine times out of ten, can wrest from unskilled brute force.

For, perhaps, half a minute the combatants stood thus.

Then, with lowered head and outstretched arms, David rushed in.

Sanderson side-stepped, avoiding the on-set.

Before David could recover himself, the other had sent his left fist crashing into the countryman's face.

The blow was delivered with all the trained force the athlete possessed and sent David reeling against the rough wall of the house.

Such a blow would have ended the fight then and there for an ordinary man; but it only served to rouse David's sluggish blood to white heat.

Again he rushed.

This time he was more successful.

True, Sanderson partially succeeded in avoiding the sledge-hammer fist, though it missed his head, it struck glancingly on the left shoulder, numbing for the moment the whole arm. Sanderson countered as the blow fell, by bringing his right arm up with all his force and striking David on the face. He sank to his knees, like a wounded bull, but was on his feet again before Sanderson could follow up his advantage.

David, heedless of the pain and fast flowing blood, rushed a third time, catching Sanderson in a corner of the room whence he could not escape.

In an instant, the two were locked in a death-like grip.

To and fro they reeled. No sound could be heard save the snapping of brands on the hearth, the shuffle of moving feet and the short gasps of struggling men.

In that terrible grasp, Sanderson's strength was as a child's.

He could not call into play any of the wrestling tricks that were his, all he could do was to keep his feet and wait for the madman's strength to expend itself.

The iron grip about his body seemed to slacken for a moment. He wriggled free, and caught the fatal underhold.

By this new grip, he forced David's body backward till the larger man's spine bade fair to snap.

David felt himself caught in a trap. Exerting all his giant strength he forced one arm down between their close-locked bodies, and clasped his other hand on Sanderson's face, pushing two fingers into his eyeballs.

No man can endure this torture. Sanderson loosed his hold. David had caught him by the

right wrist and the left knee, stooping until his own shoulders were under the other's thigh. Then, with this leverage, he whirled Sanderson high in the air above his head and threw him with all his force down upon the hearth.

A shower of sparks arose and the strong smell of burning clothes, as Sanderson, stunned and helpless, lay across the blazing fire-place.

For a moment, David thought to leave his vanquished foe to his own fate, then he turned back. What was the use? It could not right the wrong he had done to Anna. He bent over Sanderson, extinguished the fire, pulled the unconscious man to the open door and left him.

It came to David like an inspiration that he had not thought of the lake; the ice was thin on the southern shore below where the river emptied. Suppose she had gone there; suppose in her utter desolation she had gone there to end it all? Imagination, quickened by suspense and suffering, ran to meet calamity; already he was there and saw the bare trees, bearing their burden of snow, and the placid surface, half frozen over, and on the southern shore, that faintly rippled under

its skimming of ice, something dark floating. He saw the floating black hair, and the dead eyes, open, as if in accusation of the grim injustice of it all.

He hurried through the drifted snow, as fast as his spent strength would permit, stumbling once or twice over some obstruction, and covered the weary distance to the lake.

About a hundred yards from the lake Dave saw something that made his heart knock against his ribs and his breath come short, as if he had been running. It was Anna's gray cloak. It lay spread out on the snow as if it had been discarded hastily; there were footprints of a woman's shoes near by; some of them leading toward the lake, others away from it, as if she might have come and her courage failed her at the last moment. The cape had not the faintest trace of snow on its upturned surface. It must, therefore, have been discarded lately, after the snowstorm had ceased this morning.

Dave continued his search in an agony of apprehension. The sun faintly struggled with the mass of gray cloud, revealing a world of white.

He had wandered in the direction of a clump of cedars, and remembered pointing the place out to her in the autumn as the scene of some boyish adventure, which to commemorate he had cut his name on one of the trees. Association, more than any hope of finding her, led him to the cedars—and she was there. She had fallen, apparently, from cold and exhaustion. He bent down close to the white, still face that gave no sign of life. He called her name, he kissed her, but there was no response—it was too late.

Dave looked at the little figure prostrate in the snow, and despair for a time deprived him of all thought. Then the lifelong habit of being practical asserted itself. Unconsciousness from long exposure to cold, he knew, resembled death, but warmth and care would often revive the fluttering spark. If there was a chance in a thousand, Dave was prepared to fight the world for it.

He lifted Anna tenderly and started back for the shed where he had fought Sanderson. Frail as she was, it seemed to him, as he plunged through the drifts, that his strength would never hold out till they reached their destination. Inch

"COME HOME, ANNA, AND BE OUR DAUGHTER."—Page 189.

by inch he struggled for every step of the way, and the sweat dripped from him as if it had been August. But he was more than rewarded, for once. She opened her eyes—she was not dead.

He found them all at the shed—the Squire, his mother, Kate, the professor and Marthy. There was no time for questions or speeches. Every one bent with a will toward the common object of restoring Anna. The professor ran for the doctor, the women chafed the icy hands and feet and the Squire built up a roaring fire. Their efforts were finally rewarded and the big brown eyes opened and turned inquiringly from one to another.

"What has happened? Why are you all here?" she asked faintly; then remembering, she wailed: "Oh, why did you bring me back? I went to the lake, but it was so cold I could not throw myself in; then I walked about till almost sunrise, and I was so tired that I laid down by the cedars to sleep—why did you wake me?"

"Anna," said the Squire, "we want you to forgive us and come back as our daughter," and he slipped her cold little hand in David's. "This

boy has been looking for you all night, Anna. I thought maybe he had been taken from us to punish me for my hardness. But, thank God, you are both safe."

"You will, Anna, won't you? and father will give us his blessing." She smiled her assent.

"I say, Squire, if you are giving out blessings, don't pass by Kate and me."

In the general kissing and congratulation that followed, Hi Holler appeared. "Here's the sleigh. I thought maybe you'd all be ready for breakfast. Hallo, Anna, so he found you! The station agent told me that Mr. Sanderson left on the first train for Boston this morning. Says he ain't never coming back."

"And a good thing he ain't," snapped Marthy Perkins—"after all the trouble he's made."

THE END.

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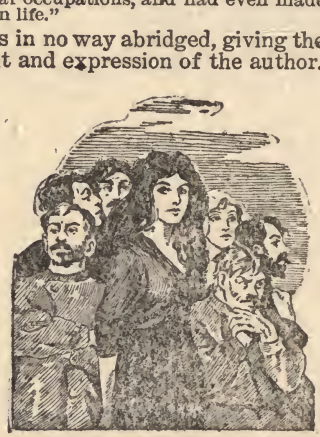

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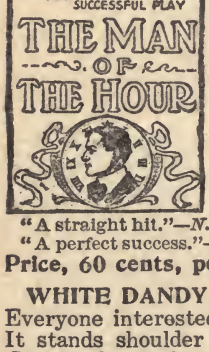

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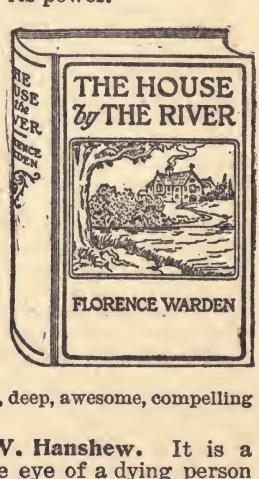

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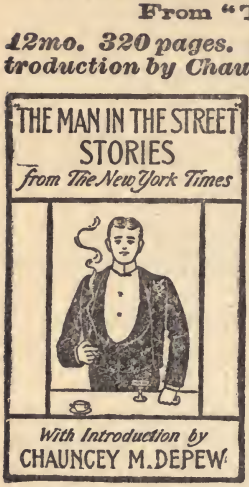

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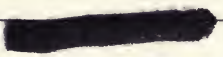

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